

# HEBREWS

## INTRODUCTION

The Epistle to the Hebrews is of such importance that I rank it beside the Epistle to the Romans (which is excelled by no other book). I have wondered how to give this magnificent Epistle to the Hebrews the introduction it deserves. Before me are excellent expository works that other men have written, and I have decided to let four of them introduce this Epistle to the Hebrews to you since each of them makes statements that are all-important. They have said what I would like to say. First I will quote from G. Campbell Morgan's book, *God's Last Word to Man*:

The letter to the Hebrews has an especial value today because there is abroad a very widespread conception of Christ which is lower than that of the New Testament. To illustrate what I mean by this, a recent writer has said:

"One of the best things we can say about human nature is this, that whenever a situation occurs which can only be solved by an individual 'laying down his life for his friends,' some heroic person is certain to come forth, sooner or later, and offer himself as the victim -- a Curtius to leap into the gulf, a Socrates to drink the hemlock, a Christ to get himself crucified on Calvary."

I am not proposing to discuss that at any length, but at once say that to place Christ in that connection is to me little short of blasphemy. We may properly speak of "a Curtius," "a Socrates," but when we speak of "a Christ," our reference to Him is not only out of harmony with the New Testament presentation, but implicitly a contradiction of what it declares concerning the uniqueness of His Person.

This is a tremendous beginning for the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Dr. William Pettingill, in his book *Into the Holiest: Simple Studies in Hebrews*, has a different emphasis in his opening statement:

From Adam to Moses, through 2500 years, and from Moses to Malachi, through 1100 years, the prophets were speaking for God to man. But at the end of the 3600 years their revelation of God was only partial. Then after a silence of 400 years, when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, and in that Son the revelation of God is perfect.

That is another tremendous statement.

Now I'm going to give a third introduction to the Epistle to the Hebrews. It comes from the excellent book by E. Schuyler English, *Studies in The Epistle to the Hebrews*:

The Epistle to the Hebrews, one of the most important books of the New Testament in that it contains some of the chief doctrines of the Christian faith, is, as well, a book of infinite logic and great beauty. To read it is to breathe the atmosphere of heaven itself. To study it is to partake of strong spiritual meat. To abide in its teachings is to be led from immaturity to maturity in the knowledge of Christian truth and of Christ Himself. It is to "go on unto perfection."

And here is a further statement:

The theme of the Epistle to the Hebrews, the only book of the New Testament in which our Lord is presented in His high priestly office, is the supreme glory of Christ, the Son of God and Son of man.

This is tremendous!

Now I turn to the fourth author, Sir Robert Anderson, and quote from his book, *The Hebrews Epistle in the Light of the Types*. As we go through this epistle I trust I shall be able to emphasize this which he emphasizes so well, and I also trust that this introduction will clarify the thought:

That the professing Church on earth is "the true vine" -- this is the daring and impious lie of the apostasy. That it is "the olive tree" is a delusion shared by the mass of Christians in the churches of the Reformation. But the teaching of Scripture is explicit, that Christ Himself is the vine, and Israel the olive. For "God hath NOT cast away His people whom He foreknew."

This Epistle to the Hebrews was not accepted by the western church for a long time, and the reason is found at this particular juncture: the church wanted to usurp the place of Israel. They adopted all the promises God had made to Israel and spiritualized them, applying them to themselves and rejecting God's purposes in the nation Israel. As a result, you'll find that the church in those early days became actually anti-Semitic and persecuted the Jew! Therefore, to say that God is through with the nation Israel is a sad blunder, and I trust that this episode may be helpful in our understanding the great truth that a Hebrew is a Hebrew, and when he becomes a Christian, he is still a Hebrew. When any person becomes a child of God, it does not change his nationality at all, but it brings him into a new body of believers called the church. Today God is calling out of both Jews and Gentiles a people for His name. When that is consummated, God will take His church out of this world, and He will pursue His purpose with the nation Israel, fulfilling all of His promises to them and through them to the gentile world in that day. I am indebted to these four wonderful expositors of the Word of God for helping us to get on the springboard so that we can plunge into the water of the Word.

The human author of the Epistle to the Hebrews has always been a moot question. Although the Authorized Version has the heading, "Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews," there is still a question as to authorship. The Revised Version and other later versions correct this and simply entitle it the Epistle (or letter) to the Hebrews. If you are acquainted with the literature of the Scriptures, you recognize that there is no unanimity of thought and no agreement as to who is the author of this epistle. When I was a seminary student, I wrote a thesis on the authorship of Hebrews, and I attempted to sustain the position that the apostle Paul is the author.

When I wrote my thesis I thought I had solved the problem and that the world would be in agreement that Paul wrote Hebrews! But I find that there is just as much disagreement today about the authorship as there was before I wrote my thesis! Neither John Calvin nor Martin Luther accepted Paul's authorship, and neither did many others of the past. On the

other hand, many do accept Paul as the author. However, the human author is not the important thing, but the fact that the Epistle to the Hebrews is part of God's inspired Word is important.

In spite of the fact that the Pauline authorship cannot be stated in a dogmatic fashion, there is abundant evidence that Paul was the author. Both internal and external evidence support the authorship of Paul. The writer had been in bonds (see [Heb. 10:34](#)). He wrote from Italy (see [Heb. 13:24](#)). His companion was Timothy (see [Heb. 13:23](#)). The writing is Pauline. Also, in my opinion, Peter identifies Paul as the writer (see [2Pet. 3:15-16](#)). I believe that there is good and sufficient reason for Paul's changing his style and for not giving his name in the epistle. I'll call attention to these things as we go along. (See the Appendix for a full treatment of the subject of authorship.)

The date of writing is particularly important in the case of the Epistle to the Hebrews because of the authorship question. Many scholars, even sound scholars, have taken the position that it was written after A.D. 70. Some give the date of A.D. 85, A.D. 96, and others up in the 90s. However, as you read this epistle, you are forced to the conclusion that the temple at Jerusalem was still standing at the time it was written. This means it had to have been written before A.D. 70, since Titus the Roman destroyed the temple in A.D. 70 and Paul had already gone to be with the Lord. I believe that it was written by the apostle Paul and it was written before A.D. 70.

Coleridge said that Romans revealed the necessity of the Christian faith but that Hebrews revealed the superiority of the Christian faith. This thought, running all the way through, is expressed in the use of the comparative word better, which occurs thirteen times. The Epistle to the Hebrews tells us that the Law was good, but that grace, under Christ, is better and that the glory that is coming is going to be the best. The Epistle to the Hebrews presents that which is better. The word perfect occurs fifteen times (with cognate words). It is an epistle that challenges us. Let us occurs thirteen times, and let occurs five times.

Two verses especially convey to us this "better" way: "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus" ([Heb. 3:1](#)). We are to consider Him. Then in [Hebrews 12:3](#) we read the challenge: "For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." That is exactly what we are going to do as we study the Epistle to the Hebrews. We are going to consider Him, the Lord Jesus Christ. I am convinced that that is the most important thing which any Christian can do.

## Outline

### I. Christ Better Than Old Testament Economy, [Heb. 1](#) through [Heb. 10](#) (Doctrinal)

- A. Christ Is Superior to Prophets, [Heb. 1:1-3](#)
- B. Christ Is Superior to Angels, [Heb. 1:4](#) through [Heb. 2:18](#)
  - 1. Deity of Christ, [Heb. 1:4-14](#)
  - 2. Humanity of Christ, [Heb. 2:1-18](#)
    - 1st Danger Signal: Peril of Drifting, [Heb. 2:1-4](#)

- C. Christ Is Superior to Moses, [Heb. 3:1](#) through [Heb. 4:2](#)
  - 2nd Danger Signal: Peril of Doubting, [Heb. 3:7](#) through [Heb. 4:2](#)
- D. Christ Is Superior to Joshua, [Heb. 4:3-13](#)
- E. Christ Is Superior to Levitical Priesthood, [Heb. 4:14](#) through [Heb. 7:28](#)
  - 1. Our Great High Priest, [Heb. 4:14-16](#)
  - 2. Definition of a Priest, [Heb. 5:1-10](#)
    - 3rd Danger Signal: Peril of Dull Hearing, [Heb. 5:11-14](#)
    - 4th Danger Signal: Peril of Departing, [Heb. 6:1-20](#)
  - 3. Christ Our High Priest after Order of Melchizedek, [Heb. 7:1-28](#)
    - a. Christ Is Perpetual Priest, [Heb. 7:1-3](#)
    - b. Christ Is Perfect Priest, [Heb. 7:4-22](#)
    - c. Christ in His Person Is Perpetual and Perfect Priest, [Heb. 7:23-28](#)
- F. Christ as Our High Priest Ministers in Superior Sanctuary by Better Covenant Built upon Better Promises, [Heb. 8:1](#) through [Heb. 10:39](#)
  - 1. True Tabernacle, [Heb. 8:1-5](#)
  - 2. New Covenant, Better than the Old, [Heb. 8:6-13](#)
  - 3. New Sanctuary, Better than the Old, [Heb. 9:1-10](#)
  - 4. Superior Sacrifice, [Heb. 9:11](#) through [Heb. 10:18](#)
  - 5. Encouragement, [Heb. 10:19-25](#)
    - 5th Danger Signal: Peril of Despising, [Heb. 10:26-39](#)

## **II. Christ Brings Better Benefits and Duties, [Heb. 11](#) through [Heb. 13](#)** (Practical)

- A. Faith, [Heb. 11:1-40](#)
- B. Hope, [Heb. 12:1-29](#)
  - 1. The Christian Race, [Heb. 12:1-2](#)
  - 2. Believers Are Now in Contest and Conflict, [Heb. 12:3-14](#)
    - 6th Danger Signal: Peril of Denying, [Heb. 12:15-29](#)
- C. Love, [Heb. 13:1-25](#)
  - 1. Secret Life of Believers, [Heb. 13:1-6](#)
  - 2. Social Life of Believers, [Heb. 13:7-14](#)
  - 3. Spiritual Life of Believers, [Heb. 13:15-19](#)
  - 4. Benediction, [Heb. 13:20-25](#)

## **Chapter 1**

**THEME:** Christ is superior to the prophets; Christ is superior to angels

The first section in this epistle is doctrinal. The first ten chapters reveal that Christ is better than the Old Testament economy. The second and last section of this epistle is practical, showing that Christ brings better benefits and duties. By the way, this is a pattern that the apostle Paul follows in his other epistles; that is, the doctrinal side and

then the practical side. In my opinion, there is an abundance of evidence that Paul did write this Epistle to the Hebrews.

Although I cannot be dogmatic about the authorship of Hebrews, I can say very dogmatically that we are dealing with the Word of God -- that which the Spirit of God has given to us. Because the Holy Spirit is unquestionably the author of this epistle, the human writer and the dating are secondary. The Epistle to the Hebrews is one of the greatest epistles we have in the Word of God. It is not pious cant when I say that I do not feel worthy or competent to deal with this great epistle. This is the reason I let four outstanding expositors introduce the epistle for me. From four different viewpoints each one came to this one point of emphasizing the person of Jesus Christ. Therefore I claim the promise of the Lord Jesus when He said that when the Spirit of God would come He would take the things of Christ and show them unto us (see [John 16:12-15](#).)

We need to keep in mind that this epistle is directed to Hebrew believers who stood at the juncture of two great dispensations. The dispensation of law had come to an end. The sacrifices in the temple that had once been so meaningful were now meaningless. What God had before required was now actually sin for a believer to practice, as this epistle will make very clear. The Epistle to the Hebrews is addressed to Hebrew believers, although its teachings are for believers of every race in every age. It is very meaningful to you and to me today. However, we do need to keep in mind that it was written to and for Hebrew believers. For example, to say that Christ is superior to the prophets would be especially meaningful to a Hebrew.

### **Christ Is Superior To The Prophets (1:1-3)**

God, who at sundry times and in divers [diverse] manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets [[Heb. 1:1](#)].

You will notice that this verse and this book begin with the word God. There are certain premises upon which this book rests. When you study geometry, there are certain axioms with which you must begin, and if you don't, you won't begin at all. If two plus two does not equal four, then you are at sea as far as mathematics is concerned. A straight line is the shortest distance between two points; that is a proven fact, and it is accepted. When that fact is established, you can move on and prove something else. In the Book of Hebrews, as in the Book of Genesis, no attempt is made to prove God's existence. Both books assume that there is a God. The Bible makes no effort to try to prove the existence of God. There are courses in seminaries today that try to build up some philosophic system by which the existence of God can be proven. I have been through courses like that, and I know what I'm talking about when I say it is a great waste of time. There is something wrong with you if you can't walk out and look up at the mountains, or go down to the seashore and look at the sea, or look up into the heavens, and recognize that there is a Creator. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork" ([Ps. 19:1](#)). My friend, if the created universe is not saying something to you about a Creator, there is something radically wrong with your thinking. As a young fellow said to me about an atheist, "Dr. McGee, he isn't dealing with a full deck!" It is the fool who has said in his heart that there is no God (see [Ps. 14:1](#)).

The second assumption we find in [Hebrews 1:1](#) is that God has spoken. Realizing that God is an intelligent Person and that He has given mankind a certain degree of intelligence, if we didn't already have a revelation from Him, I would suggest that we wait for it. It is only logical that the Creator would get a message through to us. Well, my friend, He has communicated with us. And the revelation that we have is the inspired Word of God. The first verse of Hebrews assumes that the Scriptures we have are divinely inspired. The revelation to which he refers is the revelation of the Old Testament as we have it today.

There are those who feel that Paul did not write the Book of Hebrews because it was written in such magnificent Greek. It was written by one who was a master of the Greek language. There is a smoothness and beauty in it that we miss in the English translation. Right at the beginning of this book there is a play upon two words. The word for "sundry times" in the Greek is *polumeros*, and the word for "divers manners" is *polutropos*. Notice the beauty of that -- *polumeros* and *polutropos*. It is almost poetic -- it sounds like Homer. But there is more than beauty; it is a tremendous statement.

"Sundry times" does not speak of time as we think of it. The emphasis is that God spoke through Moses, but before that He spoke to Abraham. He apparently spoke to Abraham through dreams and by sending the angel of the Lord to him, but when He spoke to Abraham, He did not tell him what He told Moses. God didn't say anything at all to Abraham about the Law. He did not give him the Ten Commandments, but later God did give the Ten Commandments to Moses. Even later on He told David that a King would be coming in his line who would be a Savior. And when David was an old man, he said that there was a King coming in his line who would be his Savior. God did not give that information to Moses, and He did not give it to Abraham. In fact, God gave Moses a law that Israel was not to have an earthly king because God would be their king. God, however, knew the human heart, and in time Israel wanted to be like the other nations round about them and have a human king. It was marvelous how God moved in a time like that. He granted their request, although He sent leanness to their souls. He used that as the method of getting the Messiah, the Savior, into the world. This first verse is telling us that God did not give all of His truth to Abraham, but added to it as He dealt with different men through the years. And in the fullness of time God sent forth His Son. There is a development of the truth in the Bible.

"Divers [diverse] manners" means that God used different ways of communicating. He appeared in dreams to Abraham, but He gave Moses the Law. Later on He made certain promises to Joshua. He spoke through dreams, He spoke through the Law, He spoke through the types, He spoke through ritual, He spoke through history, He spoke through poetry, and He spoke through prophecy. He used all these different ways over a long period of time, using about forty-five writers and communicating His Word over a period of about fifteen hundred years. The writer to the Hebrews is saying something quite wonderful to us at this point.

Have you ever stopped to think that the multiplicity of writers in and of itself makes the Bible a remarkable book? Shakespeare's writing was great on the human plane, but Shakespeare was the only author of his works. He didn't wait for a modern Hollywood writer to write any of his plays. (In fact, the Hollywood writers wreck Shakespeare's

plays!) On the other hand, God used many human writers to write the Bible. He used men with different backgrounds and different abilities. One of them, Simon Peter, did not do so well with the Greek language, but I am not going to criticize him because I had nine years of Greek and I do much worse with it than Simon Peter did. But God used Peter, nevertheless. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews (and I believe it was Paul) was a master of the Greek language. When Paul wrote to the Galatians and to the Corinthians, he got right down where the rubber meets the road. He used the language that they used down on the waterfront, and Paul had been down on the waterfront because He traveled a great deal by boat. But his letter to the Hebrews is a work of art.

Oh, this epistle opens on a grand scale: "God!" There is nothing before it to try to prove He exists. If you deny the existence of God, the problem is with you, not with God. So many little men who carry a Ph.D. degree deny that God exists. My thought is, Who are they? Put one of those puny, little minds down by the side of God and it becomes obvious why God did not waste His time proving who He is. If any person is going to come to God, that person must first believe that God is.

"Spake in time past unto the fathers." Who are the fathers mentioned in this verse? They are Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joshua, Moses, David, Isaiah, etc. These are the fathers, but they are not my fathers -- and they may not be your fathers either. Obviously this is being written to people who could call Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob their fathers, which is the reason it is called the Epistle to the Hebrews. Nevertheless, He is God of the Gentiles also, and we can be thankful for that!

"Spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets." A prophet is one who speaks for God, and in the order of speaking for God he could speak of things that were in the future. God spoke through many men who were prophets, and they were tremendous men with tremendous messages. It took all of them put together to give us the Old Testament, but the best that could be said is that they gave merely a partial revelation.

But now we will see that God has spoken finally, completely, adequately, and assuredly in His Son --

Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath  
appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds  
[\[Heb. 1:2\]](#).

Now God has spoken finally through His Son -- literally, "spoke to us in Son." Or, as Dr. Westcott put it, "God spoke to us in one who has the character that He is a Son." God has spoken through His Son. If He spoke out of heaven at this moment, He would repeat something which He has already said, because, my friend, we have the last word from God to this world in Jesus Christ.

"Hath in these last days spoken unto us." The word us is very important, referring to the same ones to whom He spoke through the prophets in Old Testament times -- Hebrew believers. You remember that the Father spoke out of heaven saying, ". . . This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" ([Matt. 17:5](#)). Since the Father has given His final word in the Lord Jesus Christ, it is the final word for you and me also. The Son is the One who is before us.



"Spoken unto us by his Son." Therefore Christ is superior to all of the Old Testament writers, because the revelation is filled up in Him. He fulfills all of the Old Testament, and He Himself gives God's final word to man. As Christ Jesus said when He was here over nineteen hundred years ago, ". . . he [the Holy Spirit] shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you" ([John 16:15](#)), so that the Spirit of God, speaking through John and James and Dr. Luke and Paul and Peter and the other writers of the New Testament, has given us the full revelation from God.

Now we are shown the superiority of the Son in seven matchless statements. None of us, I am sure, feel that we can comprehend any one of them completely.

"Whom he hath appointed heir of all things." The Lord Jesus Christ is heir of all things. Now this raises a question. In [John 1:3](#) we read, "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." Creation is His, for He created it, we are told. It belongs to Him already, so how can He be the heir of all things? Well, He came to earth and took upon Himself our humanity. The first man in the human race was given dominion over this creation. We do not emphasize this enough, because in Genesis tremendous statements are made in just a few words. Once, when we took a group to Israel, we had an Israeli Christian speak to us. When he came to the end of his message, he wanted to give an illustration, and he said, "I want to say this to you in little words." What he meant was a few words; he intended to make it brief. That is the way Moses wrote the first eleven chapters of Genesis -- with "little words." He made it brief. When God says He gave man dominion over all the earth (see [Gen. 1:26](#)), He did not make him sort of a first class gardener to set out rose bushes and prune the plum trees. That is not what Adam did. Adam had dominion. Dominion has to do with rulership. All creation was under him. I believe that when Adam wanted more moisture over on the west forty, he needed only to call for it. When he wanted the heat turned on, he could turn it on. I think he controlled this earth; but when he sinned, he lost that control.

When the Lord Jesus came to this earth, He became a man. He performed miracles in every realm. He had control of the human body. He had control of nature -- He could still storms, and He could feed five thousand people. He recovered what Adam had lost. The Lord Jesus is going to be heir of all things, and we are told in Scripture that we are heirs of God. [Romans 8:16-17](#) tells us, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. . . ." Joint-heirs is an interesting word. It does not mean equal heirs. Let me illustrate that. Some folk have been very interested in our radio program and have given us wonderful support. They will mention us in their will. Sometimes we are mentioned as a joint-heir in the will, and sometimes we are mentioned as an equal heir. For example, a will might read, "I want so much to go to such and such a cause and so much to go to the Thru the Bible Radio Network." That makes us an equal heir with someone else. When an inheritance is left to us like this, we are free to do whatever we want to with it. But when we are a joint-heir in a will, it means that somebody else has the control of the inheritance, and they allocate just so much out to each one at the proper time; they manage the estate. Well, the Lord Jesus Christ is the heir, and we are just the joint-heirs. He will be in control, and He may put you or me in charge of a little something in the universe. In that way we are joint-heirs with Christ -- we have an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, unfading, and it is reserved in heaven for us. We have this



inheritance because of the many wonderful things the Lord has done for us. He recovered what Adam lost, and even more than that, He has made us joint-heirs with Himself. Christ is the One who is going to inherit everything. As far as we know, no prophet in the Old Testament was ever promised anything like that. You see, the writer of this epistle is showing us that Christ is superior to the prophets.

"By whom also he made the worlds." Many people believe this refers to the creative act -- "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" ([Gen. 1:1](#)). Actually, it does not refer to that at all. The Greek word here for "worlds" is *aion*. It means "ages" -- "by whom He made the ages." This goes beyond His being the Creator. This lends purpose to everything. He is the heir who gives the program for the future. He made the ages, giving purpose for everything. Not only did He create everything, He did it for a purpose.

The Bible makes sense. God had a reason for the things He did, and He has a reason today for the things He continues to do.

For example, God created man and put him in a garden. He put down one condition for living there: Man was not to eat the fruit from a certain tree. There was nothing wrong with the fruit; it was God's test to that man to see if he would obey Him. (The problem was not the fruit on the tree; it was the pair on the ground!) Man absolutely and completely failed God's test at that time.

God has a program and purpose in everything. There came other periods when God tested man. The time came when He gave man the Mosaic Law. It, again, was a test of man's obedience. Today you and I live under grace. We are saved by grace; we could never be saved by the Law. Firstly, it wasn't given to us in this age, and, secondly, we couldn't keep it. We cannot measure up to the righteous standard that God has set. It ought to be quite obvious to every person that God cannot save us by works. He cannot save us by perfect works because we cannot produce perfection; neither can He save us by imperfect works because His standard is higher than that. Therefore God had to have another way, and today it is by grace that we are saved.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Creator of this universe, and there is purpose to it. Abroad today is the idiotic notion that the universe is running at breakneck speed through time and space like a car that has lost the driver. The interesting thing is that when a car loses the driver there is a wreck, but this universe, even according to the scientists, has been running millions of years, and it has been doing pretty well, by the way. The sun comes up at a certain time every morning; it is very precise. The moon stays in a predictable orbit. As one of the men who works on the moon modules says, all they have to do is aim, and the moon will be there when the module gets there. You can always depend upon the moon. It is not running wild. The moon doesn't head in another direction when it sees a module coming toward it. The movement of the moon is absolutely predictable. This is not a mad universe in which you and I live. It has purpose, and the Lord Jesus is the One who gives it purpose.

Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high [[Heb. 1:3](#)].

What tremendous statements we have here!

"Who being the brightness of his glory." Brightness means "the outshining"; it means "the effulgence." The material sun out in space gives us a good illustration of this. We could never know the glory of the sun by looking at it because we can't look at it directly -- it would blind us if we tried. But from the rays of the sun we get light and we get heat, and probably we get healing from it. That is the way we know about the sun. Now in somewhat the same way we would know very little about God apart from the revelation that God has given in His Son. The Lord Jesus Christ is the brightness we see. No one has seen God, but we know about Him now through Jesus Christ. Just as the rays of the sun with their warmth and light tell me about the physical sun, so the Lord Jesus reveals God to us today.

"The express image of his person." That word "express image" is the Greek *charakter*, the impressed character, like a steel engraving. We get our English word *character* from this. We say that the Lord Jesus Christ is the revelation of God because He is God. He is not just the printed material; He is the steel engraving of God because He is the exact copy, the image of God. Paul said in [Colossians 2:9](#), ". . . in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." How wonderful He is!

"Upholding all things by the word of his power." That little baby Jesus lying helplessly on the bosom of Mary in Bethlehem could have spoken this universe out of existence. He upholds all things by the word of His power. He not only created all things by His word, but He holds everything together.

Have you ever stopped to think about the amount of power that is required to hold it together? Man has learned very little about that power, but he has learned something. For instance, man has discovered the atom, a little bitty fellow. And when man untied the atom (they call it splitting the atom), he sure did release a lot of power. Who put all that power in the atom? Who holds all the little atoms together? The Lord Jesus Christ. He furnishes the program and the purpose; He is the person of God, and He is the preserver of all things. He not only created the universe by His word, but He holds everything together. If He let go today -- well, since you and I are held on this earth by His glue, His stickum, which we call gravitation -- we would go flying out into space. He holds everything together. This universe would come unglued without His constant supervision and power. He is not like an Atlas holding up the earth passively; He is actively engaged in maintaining all of creation. As far as I can see, that is greater than creating it in the beginning. He keeps the thing running, keeps it functioning. This is one of the tremendous things He is doing today.

"When he had by himself purged our sins." The Lord Jesus Christ provided the cleansing for our sins. This, by the way, is the only purgatory mentioned in the Bible. He went through it for you and me; there is no purgatory for anyone who trusts Christ because He purged our sins. He has paid the penalty for them. How wonderful He is! The purging was accomplished by what He did on Calvary for you and for me. And today we are accepted in the Beloved. The one who comes to Christ receives a full redemption and complete forgiveness of sins.

"Sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." This actually is the message of Hebrews. The Lord Jesus received a glory and a majesty when He went back to the Father's throne that He never had before. There is something in heaven today that was not there twenty-five hundred years ago or in eternity past, because in the glory now is the Man with nail-pierced hands and the prints of nails in His feet and a spear wound in His side. Even in His glorified body they are there, and when we see Him, we shall know Him by the prints of the nails in His hands. Twenty-five hundred years ago He was God, but today He is the God-man.

"Sat down" does not indicate that He is resting because He is tired -- or that He is doing nothing. It means that when He finished our redemption, He sat down because it was complete. This is exactly what the seventh day meant in creation -- God rested on the seventh day. Was He tired? No. As John Wesley said, when He created the universe He didn't half try. He rested because it was complete; there was nothing more that He needed to do.

Never, since I have been a pastor, have I been able to close my desk and go home with the satisfaction that everything has been done. There is always something incomplete -- you should see my desk right now! My work is never complete, but Christ sat down because His work of redemption was complete. Friend, you cannot lift your little finger today to add to the redemption He wrought for us on the Cross. He has completed our redemption, and we are complete in Christ. In [Colossians 2:9-10](#) we are told, "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power." We are made complete in Him, made full in Him, and we are accepted in the Beloved.

The present ministry of Christ is another aspect of this. This, I think, was in the mind of the writer who said, "There is a man in the glory, but the church has lost sight of Him." His present ministry can be expressed like this: He died down here to save us; He lives up there to keep us saved. He has a ministry of intercession, a ministry of shepherding, a ministry of discipling His own. Although He is at God's right hand now, He is still vitally interested in those who are His own, and He is available to us.

My friend, what do you need? Do you need mercy? Do you need help? Do you need wisdom? Whatever you need, why don't you go to Him for it? If you ask Him to intervene in your behalf, He will work it out according to His will (not yours). Prayer is not to persuade God to do something that He didn't intend to do; prayer is to get you and me in line with the program of God. And Christ is at the right hand of the Father, ever living to make intercession for us. We can obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. This is the present ministry of Christ, and it makes these verses in Hebrews pretty real to you and to me. My friend, Buddha can't help you; Mohammed can't help you; no founder of the modern religions can help you. A friend told me of how he was healed by a so-called faith healer who is now dead. I asked him, "Can she help you now?" He retorted, "No, of course not, she is dead!" "Well," I said, "Jesus is alive. Our Great High Priest is alive today."

When we were at the Garden Tomb in Jerusalem I heard a thrilling story about a group of young people in Moscow who unfurled a banner at Lenin's tomb on Easter Sunday

morning. The banner read, "Lenin is dead -- Jesus is alive." Then they sang some resurrection songs. I don't know that anyone was won to the Lord through this, but it certainly was a brave effort on the part of youth, and their message is the message of the Book of Hebrews. "Lenin is dead -- Jesus is alive." He is the One who can help us. He is the One to whom we can turn. This is the great message of the Epistle to the Hebrews. When He "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high," He took with Him a glory that even God did not have, which was the body in which He had wrought out your redemption and mine upon this earth. He gave Himself; He shed His precious blood that you and I might have life.

### **Christ Is Superior To Angels (1:4-14)**

Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they [[Heb. 1:4](#)].

Christ is superior to the angels. Angels were prominent in their ministry to Israel in the Old Testament. The Law was given by the agency of angels ([Ps. 68:17](#); [Acts 7:53](#); [Gal. 3:19](#)). Cherubim were woven into the veil of the tabernacle, and cherubim were fashioned of gold for the mercy seat. We find that Isaiah had a vision of the seraphim. And in the Book of Revelation we find that after the church is removed, there is an angel ministry of judgment that is going to take place.

Now I say this rather carefully: angel ministry is not connected with the church. I know someone is going to say, "Brother McGee, after all, we have a guardian angel." Where did that idea come from? I don't think we have guardian angels. Some people say, "Oh, but we need to have a guardian angel." Let me ask you a question: "Are you a child of God?" If you are, you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God, who is the third Person of the Godhead. What could a guardian angel do for you that He couldn't do for you? Do you want to think that over for a while? My feeling is that the angel ministry is not connected with the church at all. This subject is becoming exceedingly difficult and dangerous today because there is a manifestation of demonism, and several writers are saying that demons are directing them -- but they call them angels. My friend, an angel ministry is not for our day.

The idea of an active angel ministry in the church came about because some of the early church members who were marvelous artists liked to paint angels. I doubt whether any of them ever saw an angel, but they painted angels. If you have ever been in the Sistine Chapel in Rome and looked up at the ceiling, you get the feeling that angels are hovering over you. They are as thick as pigeons up there! They are everywhere. They are connected with everybody and everything. Michelangelo certainly did like to paint angels. Although I am glad that I've seen the Sistine Chapel, I wouldn't give five cents to see it again. I know that statement will be a heartbreak for some art lovers, but I don't care to see it again because it teaches the fact that there are angels connected with our lives today. My friend, we have to do with a living Savior! Let's just push the angels aside because we don't have to go to God through angels. We have the Holy Spirit, and we have Christ, our great Intercessor. Let us get our minds off angels and center them upon the person of Christ. He is superior to angels.

"Being made so much better than the angels." The word angel simply means "messenger," and it doesn't mean anything else other than that. Angels worship the Lord Jesus. They are created creatures. Christ is better than the angels, and that statement is made definitely and dogmatically for us in Hebrews. In the Old Testament it is believed by many that the Lord Jesus Christ is referred to as "the angel of the Lord." But in the New Testament He becomes a man, and having assumed human form, He does not appear as the Angel of the Lord any longer. He is the man, Christ Jesus. He is the Son of Man today. That is the emphasis of this Hebrew epistle.

Beginning with [Hebrews 1:5](#) there is a series of quotations from the Old Testament; in fact, there are seven quotations, and six of them are from the Book of Psalms. The Psalms have more to say about Christ than they have to say about any other person. It is a H-I-M book -- it was the hymn book of the temple, but it is all about Him; it is praise to Him. You have a more complete picture of Christ in the Psalms than you have in the Gospels. These quotations in Hebrews are very important. The writer of Hebrews quotes from the Old Testament to enforce his point, which is superiority of the Son over the angels.

For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son,  
this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father,  
and he shall be to me a Son? [[Heb. 1:5](#)].

"Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee" is a quotation from [Psalm 2:7](#). In [Acts 13](#) we have recorded Paul's great sermon at Antioch in Pisidia in which he quoted [Psalm 2:7](#). Paul said that it had no reference to Bethlehem, but it referred to the Resurrection of Christ -- when He was brought back from the dead. Therefore, Christ is the only One who could die for the sins of the world. No angel could save us, my friend. Only Christ could become a man and pay the penalty, which was death. "The wages of sin is death." He had to shed His blood, for without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. Therefore, He made that redemption for you and for me. Then He was brought back from the dead. Why? Because He is the Son. He was begotten from the dead.

"I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son" is a quotation from 2 Samuel. This is God's promise to David when He made His covenant with him: "And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son . . ." ([2Sam. 7:12-14](#)). Now, there are those who say that this one in David's line was only Solomon. Well, [Hebrews 1:5](#) makes it very clear that when God gave that promise to David it had reference to the Lord Jesus Christ. I have heard arguments pro and con on this, but arguments are pointless when we have the clear scriptural confirmation that this refers to Christ. He alone fulfilled it.

And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he  
saith, And let all the angels of God worship him [[Heb. 1:6](#)].

Now let me rearrange this a little: "And again he bringeth in the first begotten into the world. He saith, And let all the angels of God worship him."

This verse is a quotation from [Psalm 97:7](#) and [Deuteronomy 32:43](#) in the Septuagint version (though not in the Hebrew of the Old Testament). The angels of God are

wonderful, but they are inferior to the Son. They are His angels, they are His ministers, and they are His worshipers. They worship Him. He does not worship them.

And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire [[Heb. 1:7](#)].

This is a quotation from [Psalm 104:4](#). The angels belong to the Lord. They are His ministers and worshipers. This is very important to see. The writer of Hebrews, who I believe is Paul, is showing that Christ is superior to the angels, and He is using the Old Testament Scriptures to prove it. Can you see how absolutely important the first two chapters of Hebrews are? They put down a foundation for the rest of the book which deals with the present ministry of Christ for believers today. Oh, that we might be conscious of the fact that there is a living Christ at God's right hand at this very moment! He is more real than I am, because when you read these words, there is no telling where I will be. We just don't know what a day will bring forth. But Christ is going to be right up yonder at God's right hand for you and for me. He is the real, living Christ today.

It is easy to understand that angels were very important to the Hebrews because most of them were well acquainted with the Old Testament. They thought of angels as next to the very throne of God. They had read of the appearance of angels to many of God's servants and to many of the prophets. Angels were very important beings to them.

As I have already mentioned, I do not believe there is an angel ministry to the church in our day. I do not believe that angels appear to men. If you think you have seen an angel, you should check with your doctor or with a psychologist because you saw something besides an angel.

This reminds me of the two fellows who met after not having seen each other for a long time. One of them said, "Are you married?" The other one replied, "Yes, I'm married." His friend then asked, "What kind of a girl did you marry?" "Well," replied the other fellow, "I married an angel." The other one said, "You sure are lucky. Mine is still alive!"

Well, human beings never become angels. God has made this universe so that there are things visible and invisible. In [Colossians 1:16](#) we read that Christ created things visible and invisible. For example, you cannot see an atom, but it is material and it becomes energy. God created intelligences that are above man. You and I live in a universe about which the Lord has said, "In my Father's house are many mone, meaning "abiding places" (see [John 14:2](#)). Created intelligences live in these abiding places, and God has created a great deal more in this universe than you and I could ever dream of today. Man did not come from animals. There is a material kingdom. There is the animal kingdom. There are creatures below man and creatures that are above man. We did not come from animals, and we will never become angels.

You may remember the song, "I want to be an angel and with the angels sing." When I was a little boy in Sunday school, the teacher would line up the little brats (I was the only good boy in the class) and have us sing, "I want to be an angel and with the angels sing." The last thing I wanted to be was an angel! And I still feel that way. I am very happy that the Scripture makes it clear that I am not going to be an angel.



The word angel (Gr.: *aggelos*) means "messenger" and may be applied to a human or divine messenger. There is an order of creatures that is supernatural, and we see that in the Scriptures. I think it would really surprise us if we had any conception of the number of angels in the universe. They are called the "host of heaven," and that means there are a whole lot of them. Their numbers apparently are not diminished or added to in any way, but we have no idea how many angels there are. They have an important part in God's plan, but Christ is superior to the angels.

But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever:  
a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.

Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God,  
even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above  
thy fellows [[Heb. 1:8-9](#)].

These verses are a quotation from [Psalm 45:6-7](#) which reveals that it is one of the great messianic psalms. [Psalm 45](#) tells us that there is One coming in the line of David who will rule in righteousness. David is so thrilled about this prospect that he says, ". . . My tongue is the pen of a ready writer" ([Ps. 45:1](#)). David is saying, "I could tell you about this much better than I could write about it." This One who is coming, according to the writer to the Hebrews, is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the One who will rule in righteousness. God has not given the right to rule the earth to any angel.

"Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity" is a tremendous statement. Imagine this old earth being ruled by One who loves righteousness and hates iniquity!

"Thy throne, O God." This is God the Father calling God the Son God! Do you want to deny that Christ is God manifest in the flesh? If you do, then may I say that you are contradicting God Himself. God called the Lord Jesus God. What are you going to call Him? I don't know about you, but I am also going to call Him God. He is God manifest in the flesh. He is superior to angels because He is going to rule over the universe. He is the Messiah. He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords who is going to rule over the earth some day.

And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the  
earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands:

They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as  
doth a garment;

And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be  
changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail [[Heb. 1:10-12](#)].

These verses are quoted from [Psalm 102:25-27](#). This is a tremendous statement telling us that the Lord Jesus is the Creator. These are tremendous contrasts given to us in this section: Angels are the creatures; the Lord is the Creator.

But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right  
hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? [[Heb. 1:13](#)].



This verse is a quote from [Psalm 110:1](#), a psalm that is quoted more than any other psalm in the New Testament. The Psalms teach the deity of Christ. There is a more complete picture of Christ in the Psalms than in the Gospels.

Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation? [[Heb. 1:14](#)].

Right away somebody is going to say, "Doesn't it say here that the angels are going to minister to the heirs of salvation?" Let's read the verse like it is. The angels are going to minister to those "who shall be heirs of salvation." This verse is looking forward to the time when God turns again to the nation Israel, and to the gentile world -- after the church is removed from earth. Notice that it does not say that the angels are ministering to those who are right now the heirs of salvation. You see, God is moving according to His program, and He has a purpose for everything He does.

Christ is the Son; angels are servants. Christ is King; angels are subjects. Christ is the Creator; angels are creatures. Christ at this moment is waiting until His enemies will be made His footstool. The Father never gave such a promise to an angel, but He says that some day His Son shall rule. This tremendous section sets before us the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ and the exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is higher than the angels.

## Chapter 2

**THEME:** Humanity of Christ

After seeing the exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ in chapter 1, we come to the humiliation of Christ in chapter 2. He became a man, and when He did, He became lower than the angels. He was created a man in the womb of the Virgin Mary and took upon Himself our humanity. Therefore, Christ is the revealer of God, and He is the representative of man. We are going to find out two things about Christ in the Book of Hebrews: (1) He reveals God to man; and (2) He represents man before God.

I have a representative in heaven; I have someone there who represents me. I don't know about you, but I get the feeling that in my state capital and in my national capital those who are elected to represent me are not representing me at all. They are all out for themselves and their own little pet programs, and it doesn't make much difference to them what happens to the public. The only time they are interested in me is when I vote, and then I become the darling of the politicians. Then you and I are the intelligent public who cannot go wrong, provided we vote for them!

It is wonderful to have a representative before God, one who does represent us. It is good to know that we have somebody there for us because Scripture tells us that Satan, the accuser of the brethren, has access to God and accuses us before God day and night (see [Rev. 12:10](#)). Satan could tell God some pretty bad things about us, and so I am thankful I have a representative in heaven.

First we saw Christ higher than the angels, because He is God. Now we see Him become lower than the angels. He was made in the likeness of man, and we see here His humanity.

There are six danger signals in the Book of Hebrews. They are warnings to the people of Israel that they fail not to enter into the full blessings which God has provided through Christ. These six danger signals can be likened to highway markers to warn the reader. These danger signals are as follows:

Peril of drifting, [Heb. 2:1-4](#) Peril of doubting, [Heb. 3:7](#) through [Heb. 4:2](#)  
Peril of dull hearing, [Heb. 5:11-14](#) Peril of departing, [Heb. 6:1-20](#) Peril  
of despising, [Heb. 10:26-39](#) Peril of denying, [Heb. 12:15-29](#)

There are two places in which a believer can live. He can live in the desert and have a wilderness experience, or he can enter into the blessings of God by spiritually crossing the Jordan River. We find the example of this in Israel. God warned them at Kadesh-barnea that they would miss His full blessings if they failed to enter into the land.

Now I have literally crossed the Jordan River, and it wasn't pleasant at all. I was on a bus that stopped five times, and by the time we got to the Allenby Bridge I was so disgusted I didn't know whether I even wanted to cross the Jordan River. As we drove over it, I looked at that little muddy stream and thanked God that I had crossed the spiritual Jordan in Jesus Christ through His death and resurrection. That is, I had been buried with Him in baptism and raised with Him in newness of life. That is what is meant by a Christian crossing the Jordan. Joshua literally led the children of Israel across the Jordan. Christ spiritually leads the ones who believe in Him across the Jordan into a newness of life.

### **The First Danger Signal: Peril Of Drifting (2:1-4)**

Let's realize that this is a warning for every child of God in our day also, a warning that there is a danger of drifting.

Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things  
which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip  
[\[Heb. 2:1\]](#).

Because this last revelation was superior to the Old Testament dispensation and came from One who is superior to angels, we are to pay particular attention to the warning. The responsibility is now greater.

"Let them slip" is drift past them. It indicates neglect, that is all. Neglect in any area of life is tragic, but in the spiritual realm, hearing the gospel message and doing nothing about it is infinitely more tragic. What must I do to be lost? Nothing!

The story is told of the man who went to sleep in his boat one night on the Niagara River. Before long his boat drifted down to the rapids and he was caught. It was too late for him to do anything. He went over the falls and was killed. Someone asks the question, "What must I do to be lost?" We are given the answer for "What must I do to be saved?" in [Acts 16:31](#): ". . . Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. . . ." But what is the answer for "What must I do to be lost?" Well, the answer is nothing. You and I belong to a lost human family. We are not on trial. I get a little weary of hearing that God has us on trial. He doesn't have us on trial; we are lost. Today He is saving some -- those who will turn to Christ. The rest are already lost. You don't do anything to be lost, because that is your natural condition.

There is great danger in neglect in every area of life. Many years ago I had a wonderful secretary who developed cancer of the hip. The doctor told her that she must have an operation, but she kept postponing it. Finally the day came when it was too late to do anything. She had been warned, but she just drifted, just neglected taking any action until it was too late.

When you move neglect to a higher realm, hearing the gospel message and doing nothing about it is infinitely more tragic. A great many folk hear the gospel and give mental assent to it, but do nothing about it.

Some time ago a man said to me, "McGee, some day I am going to take up your offer and accept Christ." Right now, however, this man is drifting. I don't know how far along he is, but the day will come when he will be in the rapids, and then it will be too late -- he will go over the falls. He may have a heart attack or be in an accident, and his chance to receive Christ will be gone. I would like to get all the folk that hear the gospel into the "now" generation. "Now" is the accepted time. "Now" is the day of salvation. There is a real danger of drifting, and Hebrews warns us about it.

For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward [[Heb. 2:2](#)].

For example, when the two angels came to Sodom with the announcement that Sodom was to be destroyed, Sodom was destroyed exactly as they said. In fact, whenever an angel brought a message, you could depend on its being carried out just as it was stated.

Now notice the question --

How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him [[Heb. 2:3](#)].

A great Welsh preacher began his sermon by saying, "I have a question to ask. I cannot answer it. You cannot answer it. Even God cannot answer it." Then he gave this as his text: "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" And I have a sermon entitled, "A Question that God Cannot Answer." I do not mean to be irreverent, but God makes it clear that He cannot answer the question, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" Do you know a way of escape? The only way is Christ. He said so in [John 14:6](#): "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." In the Scriptures we also read, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" ([Prov. 16:25](#)). There are many ways that seem right to men. In California you can hear about as many ways as you want to hear. If you are looking for a religion, you will find one in California. If you don't find one that you like, you can start one, and I will guarantee that you will find some followers who will go along with you. There is a way that seems right to a man, but the end are the ways of death. How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation? What do you do to be lost? Nothing. You can be lost by neglect.

"Which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord" is, of course, the Lord Jesus when He was here. He said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden . . ." ([Matt.](#)

[11:28](#)) and "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" ([Luke 19:10](#)).

"And was confirmed unto us by them that heard him," refers to His disciples and others who heard Him and witnessed His death and resurrection -- then went everywhere preaching the gospel.

God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will? [[Heb. 2:4](#)].

I think the writer of Hebrews has definite reference here to the Day of Pentecost when the gifts of the Holy Spirit were exercised. The gifts, of course, confirmed the message. To whom? To the nation Israel.

What tremendous truths we have here in this first danger warning. It is a warning sign, not about speeding up but about drifting -- just drifting by these great truths which we may have been taking for granted.

### **Superiority Of Christ To Angels In His Humanity (2:5-18)**

The humanity of Christ needs to be emphasized as well as His deity. You see, He brought deity down to this earth, and He took humanity back to heaven.

For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak [[Heb. 2:5](#)].

To begin with, let us understand what world the author is talking about. A great many folk think immediately that the "world to come" is heaven. However, the word for "world" in this verse means "inhabited earth" in the Greek. This verse is talking about the people of this earth. It is used in [Matthew 24:14](#) which says, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world [inhabited earth for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." It is also used in [Romans 10:18](#), "But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the [inhabited] earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." The word world could not refer to heaven or to eternity. It does not refer to this dispensation of grace in which we live today. It speaks of the messianic kingdom, the kingdom that is coming on the earth. Hebrew believers, schooled in the Old Testament, knew that the theme song of that book was the coming kingdom over which one in David's line would rule. The messianic Kingdom became the theme song of every one of the prophets.

"Unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come" -- the millennial Kingdom that is coming upon the earth. Not only have angels not ruled in the past, they will not rule in the future. They have been servants and messengers in the past, and they will continue to be servants in the future. This is the thought expressed here.

Now he turns to [Psalm 8](#) and gives us an interpretation of that marvelous psalm which has to do with creation.

But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? [[Heb. 2:6](#)].

[Verses 6-8](#) are a quote from [Psalm 8:4-6](#). Let us pause here for just a moment. Who is man anyway? Man is just a small creature on one of the minor planets. Someone put it like this, "Man is a rash on the epidermis of a minor planet." That really puts man in his place, but I suppose it is more or less accurate. We are very small in God's universe. Someone else has said, "When you pick up the minutest piece of creation, the parts of an atom, and then you reach out to the largest, man is probably halfway between." Man stands about halfway in the physical creation, but the important thing is that the Lord of Glory, the second person of the Godhead, became Jesus, a man.

"What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" The answer to that is, "Jesus became a man. He left heaven's glory, came down to this earth, and He didn't become an angel." That is what the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews is going to tell us. "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?" What is man?

Of himself, man is nothing. Physically, if you break down the elements of his body into chemical components and put them on the market, at one time he would only have been worth about ninety-eight cents. Today due to inflation man's worth is a little more than that. But it is not of much value, especially when you think of how much a dollar is worth. So, physically, man is not very valuable. Mentally, man thinks he is something, but he knows very little. What does man actually know about this vast universe in which we live? We have spent billions of dollars to send a man to the moon to see if we could find out how it all began. Since our nation doesn't believe the first chapter of Genesis, we are exploring the moon! [Genesis 1:1](#) certainly sounds a lot better than any of man's theories. Man today isn't very much physically or mentally. He can't lift very much, and he can't do very much. Man is quite limited. When you take a good look at man, you see that he is a lost sinner. He is in terrible condition. What is man that God was mindful of him?

"Or the son of man, that thou visitest him?" Well, He visited us because He wanted to communicate with us, and He wanted to save us because He saw our lost condition.

Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands [[Heb. 2:7](#)].

God made man lower than the angels at the time of creation. [Psalm 8](#) makes it abundantly clear that man was made lower than the angels. The One who was superior, higher than the angels, was willing to come down below angels. He became not an angel but a man!

Many of us believe that the One called the "angel of the Lord" in the Old Testament is Christ. I went across the Brook Jabbok not long ago (Jabbok is in the kingdom of Jordan) and remembered that somewhere along that little creek (and that is all I would call it) the Angel of the Lord wrestled with Jacob. That Angel of the Lord we believe is Christ.

We read in the New Testament that when Christ came to earth He became lower than the angels. Apparently angels are the measuring rod; they are the standard of the bureau of standards. Christ was above the angels, but when He became a man, He became lower than the angels. Why did the Lord do it? He did it so that He could reveal God. Also He

is the representative of man before God. He brought God to earth and took man back to heaven. If you and I get to heaven it will be because we are in Christ.

This is God's original purpose with man -- "Thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands." Man is going to do something that angels have never been able to do. Angels do not rule God's universe. They are God's messengers. There was an angel who attempted to rebel against God. He tried to set up his own kingdom. He attempted to become a ruler. His name was Lucifer, son of the morning. We know him today by the name of Satan, or the Devil. He was an angel of light, but he rebelled and said in his heart, ". . . I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. . . . I will be like the most High" ([Isa. 14:13-14](#)). God does not intend him or any angel to rule; but He has created man to rule.

Man, however, as we see him today is not capable of ruling. He is demonstrating this in all the capitals of the world -- so much so that it makes me bow my head in shame. Man cannot rule, but he thinks he can -- he has adopted Satan's viewpoint. He is attempting to rule without God. God could bless our nation today, as He blessed it in the past when men recognized their dependence upon God. But man in and of himself is not capable of ruling.

Because of making trips to England, I have studied a great deal of English history. I wanted to look at the abbeys, the castles, and the cathedrals with some degree of intelligence as to their background. I did not realize just how bloody the kings of England had been. The minute a man became king, he killed all his relatives so no one could take the throne away from him. If you were a brother or a cousin of a king, you were in trouble. He was apt to take you to the Tower of London -- many a man lost his head there. Man, regardless of his race, is not capable of ruling this earth as God intended.

However, by redemption, God is going to bring man back to the place where he can rule. In [Psalm 8](#) is the statement: "thou . . . hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands." Man lost that dominion in the Garden of Eden when he disobeyed God, but Christ has recovered it.

Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him [[Heb. 2:8](#)].

"Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet" -- whose feet? Christ's -- not man's. "But now we see not yet all things put under him." Although our earth has not slipped out from under His control, He is not ruling today. When the Lord Jesus does rule on this earth, there will be no need of a hospital or a jail. There will be no crime or poverty. When He rules this earth it will be a millennial paradise. As the writer quotes [Psalm 8](#), he makes it abundantly clear that the psalmist spoke of Christ, and the prediction is not fulfilled up to the present moment.

Now we have the very heart of this chapter --



But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man [[Heb. 2:9](#)].

"But we see Jesus." Because of what the Lord Jesus has done, we behold Him. We see Jesus. This word see does not mean a casual look. The word means that we look upon Him with understanding. We recognize that in Him is something that our little minds do not grasp. We look upon Him in faith, in trust, in wonder, in awe, and in worship. All of this is wrapped up in the phrase, "We see Jesus." Do you "see" Him today? Has the Spirit of God taken the veil from your eyes so that you can see Him?

"We see Jesus." Notice that Jesus is His human name. At His conception the angel announced, ". . . thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins" ([Matt. 1:21](#)).

"Who was made a little lower than the angels." The emphasis is not on being made lower than the angels, but upon the word little, and in that word the emphasis is upon time. We could say, "Who was made, for a little time, lower than the angels." For that brief time that He was upon earth (thirty-three years) He was made lower than the angels.

"For the suffering of death" -- rather, because of the suffering of death. Christ alone could redeem man, and He could do it only by dying upon the Cross. It was the only way.

"Crowned with glory and honor." He wasn't crowned with glory and honour by His death but because He came to this earth and died on the Cross for you and for me. Let me emphasize again and again that there is a Man in the glory. He wasn't there some twenty-five hundred years ago. Instead He was the second Person of the Godhead -- let's call Him Jehovah, for Jesus is Jehovah. And He was and is God, very God of very God. But today He is also very man of very man. He took upon Himself humanity, and because He did this, He was given glory and honor in heaven that wasn't there before.

"Should taste death for every man" means that He not only experienced the pangs of death, but He had the experience of what death really is -- the very fullest depth of it. He drank the cup of death. That bitter cup was pressed to His lips, and He drank every bit of it. He did this for you and me.

"By the grace of God." He did this by the grace of God -- that God could be gracious to you and to me today and save us.

For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings [[Heb. 2:10](#)].

Jesus was not a man in whom God did something. The humanity of Jesus doesn't mean that He was a religious genius. It doesn't mean that He was a martyr to a cause. It doesn't mean that He was setting a good example. Christ's humiliation accomplished two things: (1) It brought glory and honor to the person of Christ; and (2) it procured man's salvation by making man's salvation possible. Christ took humanity to heaven, and there is not only a Man in glory, but there is a glory in that Man which was not there before.



"It became" simply means that it was fitting for Him -- it was harmonious and consistent with His Person and purpose to bring many sons unto glory in this way. "It became him [the Lord Jesus] for whom are all things, and by whom are all things." He made all things, and they were for Him. If you want to know why this universe exists, it is because Jesus wanted it; it was His will. That is the origin of this universe -- it began in the mind of Christ.

"In bringing many sons unto glory" is God's present purpose. God also has a future purpose of putting His King on His holy hill of Zion (see [Ps. 2](#)). God is moving forward with that program, but right now He is calling out a people for His name; He is bringing many sons home to glory. I read a letter a few moments ago from a young man who had sunk as low as one can go on dope and had spent time in prison. Now the Lord Jesus has saved him. We are seeing this happening all over the world. God is still calling out people for His name, bringing many sons unto glory.

"To make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." The word captain, translated "author," appears again in chapter 12, [verse 2](#). The same word is translated "prince" in [Acts 3:15](#). It means "originator or leader." A captain is one who initiates and carries through. In other words, the Lord Jesus is the Alpha and Omega of everything. He is the beginning and the ending. He starts it, and He completes it. He is the Captain. He originated our salvation, and He consummated it. How did He do it? He did it by coming down to this earth and taking upon Himself our humanity. What did He do when He came to earth? He tasted death for every man. He came to redeem mankind and to procure man's salvation. He revealed God on earth, and today He represents man in heaven. We will see that when we get to the subject of His priesthood.

"Perfect through suffering." He was made perfect in the sense of being made complete. "Perfect" is from the Greek word teleioo, meaning "to carry to the goal; consummate; complete."

He was made perfect through suffering. Although He was the Son of God, and though He was God Himself, His perfect life does not save us. His virgin birth does not save us. Actually, His teaching does not save us. His miracles do not save us, nor does His example save us. But it is His death upon the Cross that saves us. He was made complete; He reached completeness by dying on the Cross. If you could convince me that God has decided to remain aloof from man, and all He did for this lost world was to pitch the Bible down here, and as He sits in heaven, He looks down on man and says, "It's too bad you are in such a mess; here is a Book, and I hope you can work your way out," then I am prepared to turn my back upon Him. But that is not what God did. He came down to earth and took upon Himself our humanity. Because He suffered and died upon the Cross, I am prepared to trust in Him. I am prepared to love Him because of what He has done for me and all lost mankind.

For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren [[Heb. 2:11](#)].

"He that sanctifieth" -- to be sanctified doesn't mean what the average person thinks it means. For many years I thought it meant to be a nice, sweet, little boy. Well,

sanctification when it is used in connection with the Holy Spirit has to do with the work of God in us, to make us the kind of representative He wants down here on this earth. It is the work of the Spirit of God in the heart of the redeemed. However, sanctification when it is used in connection with the person of Christ (as in this Epistle to the Hebrews) is not purification. It is not a condition but a position that we have in Christ. He was the Just One who took the place of the unjust that He might bring us to God. And He has brought us now into the family of God.

"For which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." In the family of God, He is not ashamed to call us brothers. Now, of course, I would not dare call Him brother, but He has brought us into the family of God. He is the firstborn among many brethren; He is the head of the family, and He calls us brethren because we all become sons of God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

My friend, this makes it very clear that the heresy about the universal fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man is entirely false. It is probably the most damnable doctrine there is abroad today.

Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee [[Heb. 2:12](#)].

This verse is a quotation from [Psalm 22](#), the great psalm of the Cross. The first part of [Psalm 22](#) denotes the humiliation of Christ, and you actually are given the seven last words of Christ on the Cross. Beginning with [verse 22](#) of the psalm you have the exaltation of Christ: "I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee" ([Ps. 22:22](#)). I am of the opinion that we could restrict this verse to the Hebrew brethren because it was written to the Jews.

"In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee." The word church is "congregation" rather than the technical meaning of the word church.

Now here is another quotation from the Old Testament, [Isaiah 8:17-18](#).

And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me [[Heb. 2:13](#)].

This verse reveals how the Holy Spirit interprets Scripture. There are those today who try to give an interpretation of the prophets that eliminates any reference to Jesus Christ at all. In fact, when I read [Isaiah 8:17-18](#), it seems that the writer is talking about the sons of Isaiah, at least that is the way I understand it. But here in [verse 13](#) the Holy Spirit of God interprets that reference in Isaiah in such a way that it refers to the Lord Jesus Christ. Anyone today who attempts to eliminate the Lord Jesus from the prophets, therefore, is contradicting the interpretation that the Holy Spirit has given in the New Testament.

You will remember that when the Lord Jesus came back from the dead He said, ". . . go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God" ([John 20:17](#)). When Jesus said, "Go to my brethren," He was referring to His apostles at that particular time, and they were, of course, all Jewish. I emphasize this because I think it is very important to keep before us the ones to whom

this epistle was written. It will enable me to give a correct interpretation that, I trust, might lead to an application to your heart and to my heart.

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil [[Heb. 2:14](#)].

This statement emphasizes the Lord's incarnation.

"As the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." Christ came in a way they were not expecting Him to come. However, they should have known, because the prophets had made clear the way He would come to earth the first time. As George Macdonald put it:

They were looking for a King To slay their foes and lift them high; Thou cam'st, a little baby thing That made a woman cry.

Because we were made of flesh and blood, He took upon Himself flesh and blood. And He came into this world by human birth just like you and I came into the world.

"That through death he might destroy him." Christ Jesus came not only through birth -- His birth didn't save anyone -- but through death. It is by His death He saves us, not by His birth or by His life. His death brought to us salvation and deliverance from spiritual and eternal death.

And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage [[Heb. 2:15](#)].

In my opinion, E. Schuyler English (Studies in the Epistle to the Hebrews, p. 82) has the correct interpretation of this verse:

The Law of God demanded and does demand death for sin. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." "The wages of sin is death." Satan was the cause of man's sin in the first place and, even though he is a usurper, he can claim, justly so in a sense, that the sinner must die. He had the power, the authority to demand that every sinner should pay sin's penalty. And on account of this all men, because all are sinners, were fearful of death and subject to bondage, because of sin, to serve it and thus serve Satan.

For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham [[Heb. 2:16](#)].

In the Old Testament Christ took on the nature of angels. He did that when He appeared as the Angel of the Lord, and these Hebrews understood that. When Christ left heaven and came to earth, He came past the angels and came to fallen man. He took on Him the seed of Abraham. He came in the line of Abraham. God began the preparation at the very beginning with Adam and Eve. At that time God said that there would come the seed of the woman (see [Gen. 3:15](#)). Then God said He would come in the line of Abraham, and a little farther along we learn that He would be born in the tribe of Judah, of the family of David, of the nation Israel. He was to be born of a virgin. The Lord put up enough highway markers so that everybody -- not only wise men, but everybody -- should have found their way to Bethlehem when Jesus was born.

Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people [[Heb. 2:17](#)].

The Lord Jesus came down to earth in the likeness of men. In [Philippians 2:7](#) we read, "But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." It was a real likeness to men. This likeness, Vincent tells us, is "closest where the traces of the curse of sin were more apparent -- in poverty, temptation, and violent and unmerited death." Christ could have been born in the palace of Caesar, but He was born in real poverty, in a stable behind an inn. Why? So that He could know something of the effect of sin on humanity. Where do you see it? You see it in poverty. You see it in temptation. You see it in violent and unmerited death. That is where you see sin manifested.

I think it is tragic when innocent people suffer. Some time ago in Pasadena a dear, talented, Christian woman, an outstanding artist up in her 80s, was followed home by a teenager who cruelly and brutally murdered her. How terrible it was! And nothing was done about it. Thank God, He is going to make things right some day.

When Christ came to earth, He knew what real poverty was. During World War II, I went through El Paso, Texas, on the train. Before the train pulled into the station, the conductor came by and said, "Don't get off the train because there are people in this station who have been there for a week and cannot get out. They are desperate. If you leave your seat, one of them will take it and you will never get it back. Stay right where you are." We did what he said, but once the train started its journey again, I searched out the conductor and asked him what it was all about. He told me that many of those people were camping in the station, waiting for a seat on a train. Remember, this was during the war, and many men were being shipped overseas. One young woman told the conductor that her husband had been shipped out and she was stranded. She couldn't get back to her people; so she was just waiting in the station. He also told me that a little boy had been born in that station the other night. Imagine being born in a station! The little fellow is a great big fellow now, and I sure hope someone has told him about Jesus, because He also was born in a crush like that when there was a great movement of humanity. You recall that it was Caesar who made a tax bill requiring that every person under the domain of Rome be enrolled in their hometown for taxing. Mary had to go to Bethlehem although it was near the time for her baby to be born. When she got to Bethlehem, there was no room in the inn, and so the Lord Jesus Christ was born in a stable. He could sympathize with that baby born in El Paso's Union Station, couldn't He?

The Lord Jesus came to earth and took on a human body. He is able to sympathize with you and me. I don't care who you are or where you are, He knows you and He understands you -- not just because He is God, but because He became a man. He knows exactly what you and I are going through today.

At the time this book is being written there is a great deal of poverty in the Middle East, especially among the Arabs. My heart goes out to the refugees there. We cannot condone their rash acts and murder which they have committed, but do you know that some of

them have been living in those wretched camps since 1948? Their living conditions are absolutely horrible. Even their own brethren, the other Arabs, have not permitted them to integrate among their people. They have been confined to these camps. Well, there was wretched poverty in the Middle East when Jesus lived there. And "it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren." He came in poverty. The poverty of Jesus' family is almost unspeakable. He was born into a race that was under the heel of Rome; they were in subjection to Rome. He wasn't born in a palace; He was born in a stable. He was in all points made like unto His brethren. He became one of them. If you had seen that little boy playing in Bethlehem, wearing a little ragged garment, you would not have known who He was. When the artist paints Him, He stands out like a bright cameo, but He was probably just a dirty-faced little boy, not any different in appearance from His playmates. He was made like unto His brethren.

In emphasizing the deity of Christ there is a danger of underestimating His humanity. I am happy that I was not born in Bethlehem. I am delighted that I was not raised in Nazareth. I want to tell you that even today the children in those towns don't have much of a chance. Just think of what it was like in Jesus' day! Jesus Christ became a real human being, and He came out of that background. He was a root out of a dry ground. You have never had a thought nor have you ever suffered anything that He doesn't already know about. For this reason He can be a merciful and faithful High Priest.

"That he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." It is more accurate to say "to make propitiation," rather than "reconciliation." Christ made a mercy seat for you and me to come to. And, my friend, what we need is mercy. God has a great deal of it available to us because Jesus made a mercy seat, and you can go there and get all you need. I don't know about you, but I need a whole lot of it, and after I have used up a great deal of it, there is still plenty of it for you today. Christ made a mercy seat for the sins of the people, and that is the only place you can get God's mercy.

For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted [[Heb. 2:18](#)].

"For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted" -- the word should be tested. The Lord Jesus was tested, not only for forty days (that was a testing in a particular way), but during His entire life He was tested.

I want to look closely at this verse because some of you are going to disagree with what I am going to say about it. The question is asked concerning the testing of Jesus, "Could He have succumbed to the temptation? Could He have fallen?" The answer is no. When we speak of being tempted to do something wrong, what we actually mean is that we have the opportunity to do wrong, and we want to do it. Now the opportunity was the testing, but the desire to do wrong was sin, and a sinful desire is itself sin. The Lord Jesus never had that sinful desire. He was not a sinner, but He certainly had the opportunity. Knowing how hungry and weak He was from going without food for forty days, Satan began his temptation by saying, "Why don't you make these rocks into bread?" If you have been to that land, you know that there are a whole lot of rocks there! That was the temptation. He could have made stones into bread, but He didn't. His test was greater than mine. I want you to know that if I could make stones into bread I'd be in the bakery

business! He could have, but He didn't. He had the opportunity to do it, and that is the test. He did not yield to it. He did not desire to yield to the test; and he could not so desire because of the very fact that He was God.

Again I ask the question: Could Jesus have sinned? The answer is no, He could not have sinned. What then was the purpose of the testing? I feel that I can answer that best with an illustration.

When I was a boy, I lived in West Texas on the east fork of the Brazos River. In the summertime there wasn't enough water in the river to rust a shingle nail, but in the wintertime you could have floated a battleship down there. The little town has disappeared now, but when I lived there, the Santa Fe Railroad went through it and across the Brazos River. One winter we had a flood that washed out the railroad bridge -- it was a wooden bridge. So the railroad company came in and replaced it with a steel bridge. When it was completed, they brought two engines to our town, stopped them on top of the new bridge, and tied down their whistles. Well, nobody in our little town had ever heard two whistles at one time, so we all rushed down to the bridge -- all twenty-seven of us. We stood there watching, and one of the extroverts of our town asked the engineer, "What are you doing?" He said, "We are testing the bridge." So he asked, "Do you think it will fall down?" With a sneer, the engineer said, "Of course it won't fall down!" "Then why are you doing this?" This was the engineer's answer: "We are putting these two engines there to prove that it won't fall down."

Jesus, you see, was tested to prove that He was who He claimed to be. That is very important. Actually, if Jesus of Nazareth had sinned, it would not have proven that God in the flesh could sin. Rather, it would have proven that Jesus of Nazareth was not God in the flesh. The testing proved that He was God in the flesh. Because of who He is, He cannot sin. And the writer of the Hebrew epistle adds that He was tested in all points like we are, yet was without sin (see [Heb. 4:15](#)).

"For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." The word succour means, of course, "to come to the aid of, help, assist." Because He suffered being tempted, He is able to help others who are tested. As we get further along in this epistle, we will be studying the priesthood of God. We will see that the Lord Jesus Christ is able to help those who are tested. If there is one thing I hope this study in the Book of Hebrews will achieve, it is to make you and me very conscious that we have a High Priest. He is alive at this moment. He is at God's right hand, and, best of all, He is available to us. When I wake up in the dark watches of the night and toss and turn, as I sometimes do, with some burden on my heart, I can look up. My High Priest is up there. He knows me, He understands, and I can take my burden to Him. When that dark moment comes, and you and I go down into the valley of the shadow of death, we have a great High Priest up yonder who will help us. No matter what happens, no matter what the test, He is able to help us. I am afraid that we do not use His services as we should. We forget about Him and try to fight our battles alone. My friend, He is available. He wants you to come to Him.

## Chapter 3



**THEME:** Christ is superior to Moses

We have already seen that Christ is superior to the prophets, and we have just concluded the section which proves Him to be superior to the angels. Now we will see that He is superior to Moses.

Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling,  
consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus  
[\[Heb. 3:1\]](#).

This chapter begins with the word Wherefore, and this is another reason I feel that Paul is the author of this epistle. Paul used the words wherefore and therefore as sort of a hinge or cement to present that which is logical. Now in the verse before us, wherefore is even more than that. It is like a swinging door which goes back and forth both ways. Or it can be looked at as a marker when you come in on a freeway or come in on a main thoroughfare. The warning is, "Look both ways." The word wherefore looks back at what the writer has already said, and it looks forward to what he will say.

"Wherefore, holy brethren." The word brethren means those who were Hebrews like Paul was. Paul after the flesh was a Hebrew. He called the Jews his brethren after the flesh. They are called "holy" brethren in this verse, not because of the things they did, but because the word holy means "separated" -- they were separated unto God. They belonged to Him.

"Partakers of the heavenly calling." The nation Israel had an earthly calling. All the promises of the Old Testament given to Israel had to do with this earth. He promised them rain from heaven; He promised them fertility of the soil and bountiful crops. These are physical blessings, although He promised them spiritual blessings as well. Today the idea that anything physical cannot be used in a spiritual way is wrong. That is one reason people don't like to have money mentioned in church. What is wrong with money? It can be used in a spiritual way; it is not very impressive to hear somebody pray for something and then not back it up with his pocketbook. For example, if you are going to pray for missions, I would suggest you give to missions if you want to make your prayer effective. Otherwise your prayer is just like a lot of wind escaping -- that's all. It is spiritual to give; that is one of the ministries a priest performs. He offers up spiritual sacrifices. Giving is one of them, and the praise of our lips is another.

The brethren who are partakers of the heavenly calling previously had an earthly calling, but now they have come up to date and they belong to the "now" generation of those of Israel who have turned to Christ. The writer to the Hebrews will be making it very clear that they have moved into a different age. In the past they offered animal sacrifices according to the Mosaic system, and it was right to do so. But now it is wrong because the sacrificial system has all been fulfilled in Christ, and they have a heavenly calling. The earthly calling hasn't disappeared, but it has been changed for the heavenly calling -- so that they are partakers of the heavenly calling.

Several missionaries in Israel try to make this clear to us in our day. When witnessing to a Jew we tend to give the impression that he will have to cease being a Jew. I don't know why we do this. A man can still be a Jew and be a Christian. If we are German, English,



or French, we are still that when we become a child of God. Nobody asks us to give up our nationality. And the Jew is still a Jew after he has come to Christ. He has moved along with the revelation of God, and he is a partaker now of the heavenly calling. This is important to see. The Epistle to the Hebrews becomes almost meaningless if you don't consider to whom it was written -- and also when it was written.

Someone sent me John Wycliffe's Golden Rule of Interpretation. John Wycliffe lived from 1324 to 1380, and although that was a long time ago, I think his Golden Rule is still gold; it is not tarnished at all. Listen to his Golden Rule:

It shall greatly help thee to understand Scripture if thou mark not only what is spoken or written, but of whom and to whom, with what words, at what time, where, and to what intent, under what circumstances, considering what goeth before and what followeth.

My friend, you can't improve on that. If we just take that rule of John Wycliffe's and apply it to Hebrews, I don't think we will have trouble understanding this epistle. The phrase "partakers of the heavenly calling" would be perfectly meaningless apart from applying it to these Hebrew Christians.

"Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." I would like to change the word profession to confession. And the word for "Christ" is not in the better manuscripts. Some of the newer translations have made that clear, and for that reason I would like to change the verse as follows: "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession [that which we confess], Jesus."

"Consider" Him. The Greek word translated by our English word consider conveys the fact of faithful attention, giving of time, and perceiving thoroughly with the mind. It is a very significant word, and we need to recognize that it means we are to give careful and serious and prolonged thought to this One.

"Consider the Apostle." What does the writer mean? The Lord Jesus was an apostle in the very basic meaning of the word. I don't think we need to read anything into this word. After all, what is an apostle? An apostle is one who is sent. Jesus was sent from God to this earth. "Consider the Apostle," because He was sent from God to this world. He is a messenger; He is God's messenger. He is the revelation of God. Consider Him. He comes from God as an Apostle, but notice also --

"Consider the Apostle and High Priest." His priestly function will be the subject of this epistle. (The writer just mentions it at this point, but when he comes back to it, that is all he is going to talk about. We will have to wait until we get to chapter 5 to see that.) A high priest is going in the opposite direction from an apostle. An apostle, like a prophet, came from God to man with a message; he spoke for God to man. However, a high priest was going on the other side of the freeway in the opposite direction. He was going from man to God; he represented man before God.

Now Jesus is our High Priest. Who is He? He is Jesus -- the emphasis is upon His humanity. Again let me remind you that there is a Man in the glory today, and He

represents us up there. My, I'm very happy that He is up there because we are told that He is an Advocate for us; He defends us; He is on our side.

There are times when I feel that I am not quite making myself clear when I am talking to somebody. For example, some time ago I tried to explain to an audience the feeling I had when I was told that I had cancer. I felt that I wasn't getting through, that they really didn't understand. But I have the comfort of knowing that there is somebody who understands -- Jesus understands exactly how I felt.

The Lord Jesus Christ understands how you feel today. My friend, we need to consider this -- give serious thought to it and our careful attention. We have an Apostle who came from God, and He is our High Priest who has gone back into God's presence and is there for you and for me today.

This is quite a wonderful verse, as you can see!

### **Christ Is Superior To Moses (3:2-6)**

Now the writer is going to show that Christ is superior to Moses. You see, having shown the superiority of Christ over the prophets who spoke for God in the Old Testament, and having shown His superiority over the angels, now he must show that He is superior to Moses because Moses is very important to the Hebrews. Several years ago a group of rabbis held a debate in Denver, Colorado. The subject of the debate was: "Who was greater, Abraham or Moses?" It is my understanding that it was decided that Moses was greater than Abraham. If that is true, if Jesus is to be considered, He has to be superior to Moses. The writer to the Hebrews is going to show this.

Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house [[Heb. 3:2](#)].

The Lord Jesus "was faithful to him that appointed him." He was faithful as He came down to this earth to represent God to man, and He is faithful as He represents us to God.

"Also Moses was faithful in all his house." Whose house are we talking about here? The word house occurs seven times in the next few verses. It is very important to determine whose house this is. Is it Moses' house? I don't think so. It is God's house. Moses was faithful in God's house. He was called to do a certain thing, and he did it. He was found faithful.

It is true that Moses made some mistakes -- in fact, he recorded them. He wrote the Pentateuch, but the mistakes are not in what he wrote because God told him what to write. The mistakes were in his actions. He had a temper, and one time when God told him to speak to the rock, he hit it instead. It was wrong because that rock pictured Christ, and Christ's work for us. Many years earlier God had instructed Moses to smite the rock (see [Exod. 17:6](#)), and once smitten it need not be smitten again. Christ was smitten once for us; it was not necessary for Him to be smitten again. But Moses lost his temper. He did not know the implication of what he was doing when he smote the rock the second time. Although he made some mistakes, now that his life is past, it is wonderful indeed to note that the thing God remembers is his faithfulness. Faithfulness is the thing for which the Lord Jesus will commend His own -- ". . . Well done, thou good and faithful servant .

. ." ([Matt. 25:21](#)). Regardless of who we are or what work the Lord has given us to do, we are to be faithful.

I once held meetings for a wonderful preacher. He did not play golf, but since his assistant did, his assistant took me out to play golf. While we were playing, he took the opportunity to let me know he was unfaithful to the pastor. He made little dirty digs about the man and said things he would not have said had he been faithful to the pastor for whom he was working. He was disloyal to him. The following day he said to me, "I have made arrangements for us to play at a certain golf course." I said, "I'm sorry, but I won't be able to go out today," and I never played golf with that man again.

The next time I went back to that church the assistant pastor was gone, and I asked the pastor about it. He told me, "That man got us in a lot of trouble. We found out he was very disloyal." I wondered at the time if I should have told the pastor about his assistant. I have no use for a man who is not faithful to the man he is to serve. If you cannot be faithful to the man you are working under, you ought to leave your position. If you are not faithful to him, you are not faithful to God. If you are like that, and I am especially thinking of pastors, then you are a man that cannot be trusted. I would never trust that man as an assistant pastor under any circumstances. That assistant pastor wrote to me later and wanted me to recommend him to a church. I did not recommend him. How can you recommend a man as a pastor when he was not faithful as an assistant?

God says that Moses was faithful. Wouldn't it be wonderful to hear God say of you, "He was faithful"?

Now notice that the verse began by saying that Christ was faithful -- "who was faithful to him that appointed him." How, then, was He superior to Moses?

For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses,  
inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour  
than the house [[Heb. 3:3](#)].

Moses was faithful in God's house, but the Lord Jesus is the one who built the house. He is the Creator; Moses is a creature. There is the difference, my friend.

For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all  
things is God [[Heb. 3:4](#)].

"Every house is builded by some man [someone]." You can't have a house without a builder -- it can't just grow! Every house is built by someone.

"But he that built all things is God." The Lord Jesus is God, and He is the Creator. Moses never made that claim for himself.

And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a  
testimony of those things which were to be spoken after;

But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we  
hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the  
end [[Heb. 3:5-6](#)].

Not only is Christ superior to Moses in that He is the Creator and Moses is a creature, but also the best thing that could be said of Moses is that he was a servant of God -- never was he called a son of God. Christ is the Son of God. There is quite a difference between the son in the house and a servant in a house. So Christ is superior to Moses on two counts: Christ is the Creator and He is the Son. This is very important to see.

"If we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." Paul had a way of using "ifs," not as a condition but as a method of argument and of logic. We would understand him better if he had said, "Since we hold fast the confidence." In other words, if we are sons of God and if we are partakers of the heavenly calling, we will be faithful and we will hold fast. This is the proof that we are of God's house.

For example, [1John 2:19](#) puts it this way, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us" (Italics mine). I have always believed that God has permitted the cults to come along to draw out of the churches those who are not really believers. The cults serve as God's strainer. The proof that you are a child of God is that you hold to the faith. That doesn't make you a child of God, but it does prove that you are a child of God. If you are a believer, you will hold on, not because you are able but because He is able to make you stand.

So the writer of this Hebrew epistle (who I believe to be the apostle Paul) is using the "if" of argument. "If we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end" means that you are a partaker of the heavenly calling; you are among the brethren.

I have always used the Bible as a means of testing. If a person really is a child of God, he will hold to the Word of God, and he is going to love the Word of God because he wants to hear his Father talking to him.

Now let's pursue a little further the contrast between Moses and the Lord Jesus Christ. Both Moses and the Lord Jesus enunciated an ethical system. It is generally agreed, even among those outside the fold of Christ, that Moses gave the greatest legal system which ever has been given and that Jesus in His Sermon on the Mount enunciated a tremendous system of laws. However, there is a vast difference between the two. You see, the laws which came from God through Moses had to do with conduct. However, when the Lord Jesus gave what we call the Sermon on the Mount (beginning with those marvelous beatitudes: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God"), we see that instead of dealing with conduct, they deal with character. The ethical demands of Christ, apart from the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection, present a hopelessly high system. The Sermon on the Mount, apart from the redemption we have in Christ, has made more hypocrites in the church than anything else. Folk today teach the ethic and say we are to keep the commandments of the Sermon on the Mount! My friend, only through the redemption in Christ can we even approach that standard. When God spoke through Moses yonder on top of Mount Sinai, there was thunder and lightning and earthquake and terror. God warned the people to stand afar off and not to let even the cattle touch the mount. But in this age of grace God has not spoken in that manner; He has spoken from the top of a hill called Calvary. On that hill there was a cross and on that

cross there was a broken, bruised, dying man -- who was more than a man. He was God. And by His death upon that cross has flowed down to this world the grace of God.

How I thank God that He does not save by law! If He did, Vernon McGee would have to admit that he had failed and would have to look for another route. Thank God, there is another route -- the grace of God.

"If [since] we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." Since you are a child of God, you will be rejoicing in the hope firm unto the end. This is another reason it is difficult to tell if folk in our churches are really saved. Some of them look and act as if they had been weaned on a dill pickle! They are not rejoicing in Christ.

Oh, my friend, Jesus is superior to the prophets. He is superior to angels, and He is superior to Moses. How wonderful He is! No wonder we are told to consider Him. In [Hebrews 3:1](#) we are told to consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession [confession], Christ. In [Hebrews 12:3](#) we are going to be admonished again: "For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." A person would be very discouraged if all he had was the Sermon on the Mount. I feel sorry for you if you are attempting to make the Sermon on the Mount your religion. If you don't have redemption in Christ, you are flying under false colors.

We are to consider Him -- consider Him in His person, consider Him in His performance, His work upon the cross. Someone has put it poetically:

When the storm is raging high, When the tempest rends the sky, When  
my eyes with tears are dim, Then, my soul, consider Him. When my  
plans are in the dust, When my dearest hopes are crushed, When is  
passed each foolish whim, Then, my soul, consider Him. When with  
dearest friends I part, When deep sorrow fills my heart, When pain racks  
each weary limb, Then, my soul, consider Him. When I track my weary  
way, When fresh trials come each day, When my faith and hope are dim,  
Then, my soul, consider Him. Clouds or sunshine, dark or bright,  
Evening shades or morning light, When my cup flows o'er the brim,  
Then, my soul, consider Him. "Consider Him" -- Author Unknown

My friend, we are to consider Him in this epistle, and we will need the Spirit of God to make Him real to us.

### **The Peril Of Doubting (3:7-19)**

Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, Today if ye will hear his voice  
[\[Heb. 3:7\]](#)).

Notice that we have another wherefore which opens this section. We had a wherefore in [verse 1](#), a wherefore here in [verse 7](#), and we are going to have wherefore again in [verse 10](#). It is a very important word. As I said, it is a swinging door that swings back into the past and swings out into the future. Also it is a danger signal as you come down the great highway that leads to heaven. In effect, it warns: Look both ways before you pull out -- some crazy driver may be coming down the wrong side of the highway.

Wherefore, that is, in view of what has already been said, since the word spoken by the prophets and the word spoken by angels and the word spoken by Moses was so important, what about the importance of the word spoken by Jesus? We need to be very careful about doubting Him.

"To-day if ye will hear his voice" begins the quotation from [Psalm 95:7-11](#).

Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:

When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.

Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways.

So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.) [[Heb. 3:8-11](#)].

I believe that Christ is in every psalm, although I admit that I am not able to find Him in every psalm. However, here He is in [Psalm 95](#); "For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. Today if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation [testing] in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted [tested] me, proved me, and saw my work. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways: unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest" ([Ps. 95:7-11](#)).

[Hebrews 3:7-11](#) interprets this portion of [Psalm 95](#), and Israel is given to us as an example. Let's consider this for a moment. The generation of Israel that came out of Egypt doubted God, and because of their doubt they never entered the land of Canaan.

"They shall not enter into my rest." I have marked in my Bible that final word rest. There are at least a dozen references in this chapter and the next chapter to the word rest, but it does not always mean the same kind of rest.

There is the rest of salvation. The Lord Jesus referred to this in [Matthew 11:28](#) when He said in effect, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will rest you; that is, I'll lift the burden of sin from you." Because He bore it for us upon the cross, our sins are forgiven, and we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins. Therefore, you don't have to do anything so that God will forgive you; Christ has already done it when He died for you. All you have to do is believe and receive Christ.

The people of Israel now know the rest of redemption. They are no longer slaves in Egypt. They came out by blood -- blood on the doorposts. They came out by power -- God brought them across the Red Sea. God had delivered them. But then the Lord Jesus went on to say, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls" ([Matt. 11:29](#)). That is a different kind of rest. It is not the rest of redemption; I would call it the rest of obedience, the rest of enjoying the Christian life.



When the children of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, as they crossed over the Red Sea, they sang the song of Moses -- ". . . I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea!" ([Exod. 15:1](#)). "God has delivered us -- how great He is!" After they left Sinai, an eleven-day journey could have gotten them into the Promised Land. But no, they had to send spies in to search out the land. It wasn't necessary -- God said He would take care of them, but they didn't believe God. So God yielded to their wishes and let them send in spies. Although the spies did see the wonderful land, they were most impressed by the giants, and they saw themselves as grasshoppers. They didn't see God. They returned to the people with a false report -- except Caleb and Joshua who insisted that God could handle the giants if they trusted Him. But the people accepted the majority report (this is my reason for believing that committees are not satisfactory for doing the Lord's work), and they spent forty years on a journey that should have taken a few days. What was the reason? Unbelief.

You see, they didn't believe God enough to enter into the land. They believed Him enough to come out of Egypt, but not enough to enter Canaan. God said that that generation of unbelievers would die in the wilderness and He would bring their children into the Land of Promise. And we find later that Joshua did bring the next generation into the land. They had to cross another body of water, the river Jordan. How did they do it? Well, God sent the ark of the covenant (symbolic of God's presence) ahead on the shoulders of the priests. When their feet touched the brink of the river, the waters of Jordan were cut off. "And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan" ([Josh. 3:17](#)). Then they took twelve stones out of the middle of the river, where the priests still stood with the ark, and placed them as a memorial on the shore. Then they replaced them with twelve stones from the Land of Promise. When the waters of Jordan returned and covered those twelve stones, it was symbolic of the death of Christ. The twelve stones which were taken out of the river and placed as a monument on the other side speak of the resurrection of Christ.

Paul talks about this in [Romans 6:4](#), where he says, "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." We are now joined to a living Christ, and that is the only way we will enjoy Canaan. Canaan is not heaven. We are going to find out that there is an eternal rest, and Jesus gives that rest, but the question today is, "Have you entered into the rest that believers are to have as they sojourn on earth?" Are you a rejoicing Christian today? You will find out that the only way to do it is to study and believe the Word of God. How many Christians today, how many church members really study the Word of God? The Book of Hebrews is going to tell us that the Word of God is quick and powerful. Now that refers to the Lord Jesus Christ, but it also refers to the written Word. Therefore, the only way you and I can stay close to Him is to stay close to the Word of God. And the only way you and I can enjoy the grapes and fruits of the land, and the beauty and enjoyment of it, is by studying God's Word. Without a personal acquaintance with the Word of God, being a church member is like wearing a yoke, being browbeaten to give money, and having to do certain things. Everything is a duty instead of a drawing to the wonderful person of Christ.

The writer of this Hebrew epistle is speaking to those who are already saved but have not entered into the blessings of the Christian life. They doubt God, and as a result they are having a wilderness experience.

"Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways." Notice where they erred. In their minds? No, in their hearts. Now hold that thought in your mind for a moment. The generation of Israel who came out of Egypt were cited to the Hebrew believers in the apostolic days as a warning not to repeat their sin. There was a danger of their doing that. And, my friend, we have the same danger, the danger of erring in our hearts.

"So I swear in my wrath" -- it was not necessary for God to take an oath, but He did.

"They shall not enter into my rest." God said that, because of unbelief, the generation of Israelites would not enter into the Land of Promise. And, my friend, until you not only accept the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, but walk with Him by faith, committing your life to Him, you are not going to know anything about the joys of Canaan. Unfortunately, we have a great many wilderness Christians in our churches. The wilderness is a place of death; it is a place of unrest; it is a place of aimlessness; and it is a place of dissatisfaction. To those Israelites out there in the wilderness God said, "You are not going to know what rest is." And there are many believers today who just don't know what rest really means. They have never entered into it because they must enter by faith.

Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God [[Heb. 3:12](#)].

You may ask, "Could that be true of a believer?" It certainly could. It is very important to realize that God was angry with their sin. What was their sin? It was not murder; it was not stealing; it was not lying. What was it? My friend, they didn't believe God. That was their great sin.

But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin [[Heb. 3:13](#)].

"Exhort one another" -- we ought to do this, my friend, exhort and encourage one another.

"Lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." Although this is primarily a warning to believers not to miss their blessings because of the deceitfulness of sin, it has application to the unsaved person also. Unbelief in the heart is what is robbing folk of salvation. When someone tells me that he has an intellectual problem that hinders him from receiving Christ, I simply do not believe it.

Let me illustrate this from an experience I had when teaching a weekly Bible class in downtown Los Angeles. One evening a broker noticed the great crowd going into the church. They all had Bibles, and they looked as if they were interested in where they were going, so he was curious as to what could attract so many people to church in the middle of the week. Now this broker was a fine man in many ways. If you had met him, you would have said he was a fine man. Well, he followed the crowd into church and stayed through the service. Later he came up to me and said, "All you did was teach the

Bible! Is that what brings people in?" I told him that I thought it was since that's all we did on Thursday nights. Well, the man continued to come on Thursday nights, and then he started coming on Sundays, and soon he was under conviction.

One day he came to my study and said, "I thought I was a Christian. Now I know I am not. I am only a member of a church. But, I have a few intellectual problems with some of the things you have said. One of them is the story of Jonah. It is impossible for me to believe that a man could live inside a fish for three days and nights."

I asked him, "Who told you that Jonah lived three days and three nights inside a fish?"

"I have heard preachers say it. Isn't it in the Bible?"

"Not in my Bible." So I turned to the Book of Jonah and showed him what it did say, then turned to the New Testament and read what Jesus had said about it: "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" ([Matt. 12:40](#)). I said to this broker, "If you are going to have trouble with the resurrection of Jonah, then you will have trouble with the resurrection of Jesus."

"Well," he said, "I didn't know it was that way. That is no problem for me at all now."

"Do you have another intellectual problem?"

"Maybe I don't."

I looked him straight in the eye and asked, "What sin do you have in your life that is keeping you from Christ?"

He turned red and asked, "Has somebody been telling you about me?"

"No, I just know that your intellectual problem is really a heart problem. There is something in your life that is keeping you from Christ."

He broke down. In fact, he wept and confessed that he had been paying the rent for his secretary's apartment and was spending a great deal of time there. I asked if his wife knew about it. He said that he had kept it a secret. Then I asked him, "Then that's your trouble, isn't it -- you wouldn't want to give up your secretary for Christ?"

He looked at me and said, "Yes." Then he said, "I'll stop the rent and I'll talk to her tomorrow."

Well, he not only talked to her, but he fired her. She threatened to expose him, but she didn't. He got down on his knees that very day in my office and accepted Christ as his Savior.

My friend, I have been a preacher for a long time, and I have learned that people don't really have intellectual problems which keep them from Christ, but they sure do have sin problems.

There is another passage of Scripture (in [2Corinthians 3](#), beginning with [verse 6](#)) that deals with Moses, which I would like to call to your attention. "Who also hath made us

able ministers of the new testament [covenant]; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." The Law condemns us, you know, but only the Holy Spirit can give us life. "But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones [this is the Ten Commandments], was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away." Paul is not saying that the Law wasn't glorious; it was, but that glory was to disappear. Now let's drop down to [verse 11](#): "For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious." He is making a contrast between the glory of the Law, which actually made Moses' face shine, and the greater glory that we have in Christ. "Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: and not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished" ([2Cor. 3:12-13](#)). You see, Moses didn't put a veil over his face as a dimmer, to dim the glory (which is the general interpretation) but the glory was disappearing and he put a veil over his face so that folk wouldn't know about its disappearance. But there is another glory now, the glory which is in Christ. "But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart" ([2Cor. 3:14-15](#)). You see, unbelief is not an intellectual problem; it is a heart problem. Perhaps you, my friend, are one who has not come to Christ because there is sin in your life and you do not want to give it up. The minute your heart is ready to give it up, at that moment your "intellectual" problems will dissolve. He will take the veil away from your mind, and you can come to Christ and be saved. Now notice [verse 16](#): "Nevertheless when it [the heart] shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away." The veil will be removed from your mind when your heart turns to Christ. And the next verse: "Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." The Holy Spirit will move into your life and make Christ real to you, as He is doing for multitudes of folk in our day. Then when we come to Him -- ". . . we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" ([2Cor. 3:17-18](#)). If you turn to Him -- oh, my friend, the future that will await you as you grow in grace and in the knowledge of Him!

Now let's return to [verse 13](#) where we are reminded, "But exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." We as believers need to beware of the deceitfulness of sin. We can actually come to the place where we feel our lives are satisfactory to God although we are leading a wilderness life. For example, a believer can be dishonest and yet say that his conscience does not condemn him! Then he should condemn his conscience, because it has become hardened through continuance in sin. I know men in the ministry who have been totally dishonest; they have been found to be liars, yet they can get down on their knees and pray the most pious prayers I've ever heard. And their conscience does not condemn them. Of course it doesn't condemn them, because it has become hardened; they are permitting sin in their lives.

This writer of the Hebrew epistle goes back to the wilderness experience of Israel, applies it to the Hebrew believers of the first century, and steps on our toes also. It is the Holy Spirit who applies these truths to our own hearts.

For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end [[Heb. 3:14](#)].

"We are made partakers of Christ." Just think of that! We are in Christ. He belongs to us.

"If we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end" is the same argument he used in [verse 6](#). We prove that we are members of Christ's house, that we belong to Him, "if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."

Now in this section the emphasis is upon the rest which is ours if we trust Christ. Scripture presents a fivefold rest: (1) creation rest; (2) entrance into Canaan; (3) the rest of salvation; (4) the rest of consecration; and (5) heaven. Here the writer is talking about the rest of fully trusting God, not only for salvation but for daily living.

While it is said, To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation [[Heb. 3:15](#)].

The quotation concludes with a quotation from [Psalm 95](#), which we have already seen in [verses 7](#) and 8. Obviously he repeats it to remind the reader that these truths are not for yesterday only, but for us today.

If you would ask me, "Preacher, what is the great sin in your life, what is it that has held you back more than anything else?" I would have to admit that it is unbelief. As I look back upon my years of ministry, I realize that I did not believe God as I should have. And today there is one thing I want above everything else, and that is to believe God. I want to commit my life to Him completely, turn everything over to Him.

Flying from London to Los Angeles not long ago, we had a cloud cover until we got over Greenland. Then I could see the icebergs. They may be pretty in pictures, but when I looked at them from a height of thirty-eight thousand feet, they didn't look so pretty. They looked cold and foreboding. I saw a glacier coming down between two mountains to the water's edge. I prayed right there. I said, "Lord, You know I trust You when I am on the ground, but I have difficulty trusting You when I am flying. I am in a place right now where I need to trust You. Help me to put all of my weight down in Your arms and rest in You." For the first time in my life I went to sleep on an airplane! I have never done that before. I always had to stay awake so I could help the captain of the ship. But this time I went to sleep and left it all to the Captain of my salvation. When the plane landed in Los Angeles, I said, "Thank You, Lord, for the little victories. Maybe it wasn't much for You, but it was a whole lot for me."

My friend, this is the "rest" the writer of this Hebrew epistle is talking about, the rest of fully trusting God -- not only for salvation but for daily living, for the help and the wisdom and the strength we need to live the Christian life.

The people of Israel wandered in the wilderness because they did not have faith to enter the Promised Land. As we have seen, Canaan does not represent heaven; it represents the place of spiritual blessing and victory. The apostle Paul was, I believe, speaking of his own experience when he cried, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" ([Rom. 7:24](#)). That is not the cry of an unsaved man, it is the cry

of a saved man who is a defeated Christian, who finds no satisfaction in Christ because he is not trusting. The problem was lack of faith.

For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses [[Heb. 3:16](#)].

In the word provoke is the thought of God's being highly displeased with them because they had heard but did not believe. They had had faith enough to come out of Egypt, but that was as far as it went.

But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? [[Heb. 3:17](#)].

Again, what was their sin that so grieved God? It was unbelief. We do not recognize -- and I am sure they did not recognize -- that doubting God's Word is such a serious sin. It is one of the worst because it leads to other sins. For these Israelites in the wilderness it led to calf worship; it led to fornication; and it led to an absolute denial and rejection of God, as they turned their backs upon Him and even wanted to go back to Egypt. They decided that slavery in Egypt was better than walking by faith into the Promised Land!

Unfortunately, there are many Christians who still walk after the world. They do not know what it is to really trust Christ and walk in complete faith and trust in Him.

Now notice the question: "With whom was he grieved forty years?" He was grieved with that crowd that came out of Egypt. They had sinned, and their carcasses fell in the wilderness. Only two men out of that crowd had faith to believe God, and they were Joshua and Caleb. They were the only two who made it into the land. Even Moses did not make it into the Promised Land, although his problem was not so much a lack of faith, as it was actual disobedience when he struck the rock in anger rather than speaking to it as God had commanded.

And to whom swore he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? [[Heb. 3:18](#)].

"And to whom swore he that they should not enter into his rest" -- that is, the rest of Canaan; he is not speaking of heaven. Because of their unbelief they knew nothing about walking in Canaan, enjoying its fruits, and finding satisfaction in simply trusting God. God said that they would not enter into His rest. And He took an oath on that. Believe me, God doesn't have to take an oath, but when He does, you know He really means business.

Again, about whom is He talking? Those who did not believe. Their worship of the calf and their fornication were not the sins that kept them from God's blessing. It was the sin of unbelief. Oh, my friend, unbelief not only robs us of blessing, but it leads to other sins as well. The other day a man said to me, "Here I am a Christian and I did this stupid thing." Well, the thing that he did was actually dishonest. But the point is that he was deeply concerned about his dishonesty but was ignoring the root of it -- he hadn't believed God. That did not disturb him at all.



So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief [[Heb. 3:19](#)].

I suggest that you underline this verse in your Bible. This is what is robbing you and me of many blessings -- unbelief.

## Chapter 4

**THEME:** Christ is superior to Joshua; Christ is superior to the Levitical priesthood

In the first two verses of chapter 4 we have a continuation of the warning concerning doubting which was given in chapter 3.

Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it [[Heb. 4:1](#)].

We have come to the first "Let us" in this Epistle to the Hebrews. Constantly Paul urges the Hebrew believers to go on with the Lord; he is constantly challenging them. This is the first "Let us," but there is a whole lot of "Let us" in this epistle.

"Let us therefore fear." There are always those folk who are eager to find fault even with the Word of God, and they will say that this statement is a contradiction of other statements in the Bible. We are told in [Romans 8:15](#), "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear. . . ." And in [2Timothy 1:7](#) Paul wrote, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." Well, I have an answer for those folk in a message I have called, "When It Is Not Wrong to Fear." I hope that you are afraid of a rattlesnake. If I see one coming down the road, I don't simply move to the right-hand side, I give him the whole road! There are certain things that you and I would do well to fear -- "Let us therefore fear." I wish there were more concern among believers today about ignorance of the Word of God. In a church I pastored, a man was on our church board who was on about every board in town because he had a lot of money. He actually boasted of how many boards he was on. Then one day he boasted to me of how ignorant he was of the Word of God! The writer to the Hebrews said, "Let us therefore fear." That man should have said to me with great concern, "Oh, my ignorance of the Word of God! I am afraid of it." There are very few believers who are afraid of their ignorance of the Scriptures.

When Paul says, "Let us therefore fear," he is speaking of a good fear. When I take my grandsons for a walk, I warn them not to go out into the street. I want them to be afraid to go out into the street -- that is a good fear. The Word of God says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge . . ." ([Prov. 1:7](#)). That is the kind of fear you and I are to have.

The fear he is talking about is for a purpose: "Lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." He is going to talk a great deal about rest in this chapter. The word rest occurs eight times here. There are several different kinds of rest, including Sabbath day or creation rest, and Canaan rest. Here he is speaking of Canaan rest. He is saying to believers, "Be afraid, because you do not want to miss it." How many believers are missing that rest today? Have you entered into rest? Do you know, Christian friend, what it is to really trust Christ and rest in Him?

For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it [[Heb. 4:2](#)].

Here is the "rest" of salvation, the rest of trusting Christ as Savior. They heard the gospel but did not believe it.

### **Christ Is Superior To Joshua (4:3-13)**

Moses led the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt, but he could not lead them into Canaan. Joshua led them into the land, but we will see here that he couldn't give them rest. Many of them never found rest -- they never really laid hold of their possessions in the land. The world, the flesh, and the Devil rob many of the blessing God has for them. You and I live in a mean, wicked world. This world is not a friend of grace; it is not the friend of believers. Many of us have not discovered that yet.

For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world [[Heb. 4:3](#)].

He is discussing here salvation rest, the rest of trusting Christ. Let me ask you a question: If you knew a man who professed to be a Christian and whom you really believed was a born-again believer, and he suddenly stopped living the Christian life and began acting like the world, if he stopped going to church, stopped giving to the Lord's work, and stopped all his participation in Christian activity, would you think that he had lost his salvation? If you were that person, would you feel that you had lost your salvation? If you think that this would cause you to lose your salvation, may I say to you that way back in your mind and deep down in the recesses of your heart, you are not really trusting Christ. You are believing that those activities add to your salvation, but they do not. You are to completely trust Christ. Don't misunderstand me. I believe that if you are trusting Christ you are going to be doing those things, but doing those things has nothing in the world to do with your salvation. My friend, have you really entered into rest?

For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works [[Heb. 4:4](#)].

This is the Sabbath. God rested on the seventh day, and that was the Sabbath day. However, the Sabbath today is not a day you keep or observe. Have you entered into the real Sabbath today? Do you know what it is to trust Christ and Christ alone for your salvation? Are you trusting anything else? Is He it? Have you entered into rest?

I had a good friend who was a doctor and who observed Saturday as the Sabbath. We used to play tennis together, and we got pretty well acquainted with one another. One day after we had played three sets of tennis, we sat down on the bench, and we began to have what you would call a religious argument. He looked at me and said, "McGee, do you keep the Sabbath day?"

"Yes, I keep the Sabbath."

He looked at me real hard and said, "What day?"

I said to him, "Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and then I start all over again on Saturday."

He said to me, "What in the world do you mean?"

"Well, the way I understand the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Sabbath day is now this day of grace in which we live, and Christ, after He died on the Cross and came back to life, went back to the right hand of the Father and sat down. He sat down, not because He was tired, but because He had finished your redemption and mine. So now He tells me, 'You rest in Me.' I have a Sabbath day every day -- I rest in Christ."

That doctor friend looked at me in amazement. "Well," he said, "that's better than having just one day, isn't it?"

I said, "It sure is. Seven days a week is a sabbath of resting in Christ."

And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest.

Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief [[Heb. 4:5-6](#)].

It is unbelief that robs you of the rest of salvation, that robs you of the rest of satisfaction and blessing which God can give to you. Oh, the wonderful rest that He wants to give to us!

Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To-day, after so long a time; as it is said, To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts [[Heb. 4:7](#)].

He is not saying tomorrow, but today. Today is the day for you and me. Today, right now, wherever you are, look at your watch or clock. What time is it? Well, this is the time of salvation. Now, right now you can trust Christ to save you. "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day [[Heb. 4:8](#)].

Joshua is the Old Testament or Hebrew word for "savior"; Jesus is the Greek or New Testament word, meaning "savior." In the verse before us -- Joshua: "For if Joshua had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day." When Joshua was old and stricken in years, there was yet very much land to conquer. The people of Israel had not entered into all the blessing God had in store for them. Joshua wasn't able to secure it for them. But, my friend, if you trust Christ, Christ can let you enter into the Canaan of the present day, in which there will be fruit and blessing and joy in your life. Oh, how we need this today! What robs us of it? Unbelief.

There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God [[Heb. 4:9](#)].

Here the writer is projecting into the future when all the people of God are going to find a heavenly rest. Heaven will be a place of deep satisfaction, of real joy, and real blessing. "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God."

For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his [[Heb. 4:10](#)].

We shouldn't get the impression that when God rested on the seventh day He sat down and said, "My, I'm tired. I've been working for six days, eight hours a day, from sunup to sundown, and I'm weary! I'll pull up the rocking chair and rest." That is not the thought behind "rest" at all. The thought here is the rest of completeness. Creation is finished. God has never been in the business of creating since then. There were just so many atoms which He needed for His universe, and He just made them all at once. He hasn't made any more since then. Now there have been quite a few changes taking place in the universe, but it is just those original little atoms rearranging themselves.

You and I live in a universe where creation is over with -- except in the new creation. That new creation began yonder at Calvary and the Day of Pentecost. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" ([2Cor. 5:17](#)). Sons of God are the only things God is creating today -- through faith in Christ. And there is a rest that He has promised to them. God has promised a heavenly rest, but, my friend, He wants us to enjoy ourselves even now. As someone has said, "All the way to heaven is heaven." We ought to enjoy this life. That is what the writer is talking about here: God rested, He ceased from His labors, and He is finished. Therefore, you do not have to lift your little finger to do something toward your salvation. Isn't it really a matter of conceit on our part to think that you and I as sinners could do anything that would cause God to say, "Oh my, what a nice little fellow you are! I'm so happy to have you in heaven because you are going to add a great deal to it"? Well, my friend, that is not the picture at all. He did it all for us. Even our righteousness is filthy rags in His sight. He cannot accept our righteousness, because we really do not have any. "There is none righteous, no, not one" ([Rom. 3:10](#)). Therefore He offers a finished salvation to us, and when we trust Christ we become new creations in Him.

Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief [[Heb. 4:11](#)].

I think the supreme satisfaction that can come to a child of God is that he is in the will of God, doing the work of God, and trusting and just resting in Him. That is the glorious place to which God wants you and me to come. Mary came to that place. She sat at Jesus' feet while Martha was back yonder in the kitchen with those pots and pans. Martha wanted to serve Christ, but she just didn't know what real rest was. She probably decided she was going to bake something and reached for a pan. It was not big enough and she was going to put it back and get a bigger one, but she dropped it on the floor. What a time she had with those pots and pans! She was really worn to a frazzle and finally lost her temper. But Mary was just sitting at Jesus' feet, doing nothing -- she had already done her work. We need to learn to find our satisfaction sitting at Jesus' feet.

"Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest." Someone will say, "Do I have to labor to enter into rest?" Yes, my friend. This is sort of like the Irishman who said he intended to have peace in his home even if he had to fight for it. Fighting for peace? Yes! I wish America had learned that lesson. May I say to you, you must win a war before you can have peace. You have to have a victory before you can have peace. He says here, "Let us

labor in order to rest." After all, when you have worked at something and come to the end of the day and sit down, isn't there a satisfaction in what you have done? Oh, today, we need to lay hold of God! To lay hold of God in prayer, and in faith, and to be used of Him. Oh, my Christian friend, let us labor toward that end.

"Lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief." The only thing in the world that can rob you of that rest is unbelief. Ever since I retired from the pastorate my prayer has been, "Oh, God, help me to trust You." I was a pastor for forty years, and very frankly, I look back and have to say that I wish I had trusted Him more. Many times I was so fearful and unbelieving. So today I want to simply lean back and trust Him. How wonderful He is! He is worthy of our trust.

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart [[Heb. 4:12](#)].

"For" -- Paul used the words wherefore, therefore, and for as cement to hold together his argument. Someone has said, "Regardless of what you want to say about Paul, one thing you have to say is that Paul is logical." Paul was a marvelous logician, and I believe he wrote this epistle. For is a little word, but it is a big word. Someone has said, "God swings big doors on little hinges." Here is one of those little hinges, but there is a big door hanging on it.

"The word of God." There are some expositors who consider the "word" here not to be the written Word, but the living Word who is the Lord Jesus Christ. However, in Scripture the written Word is called the living Word. I believe the reference here is primarily to the written Word of God. As the written Word reveals Christ -- it is a frame that reveals the living Christ -- the reference here could be to both the written and living Word.

Quick is "living." The Word of God is living.

"Powerful" -- the Greek word is *energes*, meaning "energizing." The Word of God is living, and it energizes.

"Sharper than any two-edged sword." I had a professor in seminary who said to a group of us young preachers: "Remember when you preach the Word of God that it is quick and sharp, but it is a two-edged sword. It will cut toward the congregation, but the other side is going to cut toward you. Therefore, don't preach anything that you are not preaching to yourself." I have found many times in my ministry that I am preaching to myself. The sermon might not have been for anybody else, but it was for me.

I have a friend who likes to kid me about my recording of tapes for our radio Bible study broadcasts. He says, "There you are, sitting in your study, just talking to yourself!" Very candidly, that is the way it works out many times as I sit there teaching the Bible. I'm speaking to myself. It may not apply to anyone in the radio audience, but it applies to me. The Word of God is two-edged. It will cut toward the other fellow, but it will also cut toward you and me. The Word of God is a two-edged sword, and it will penetrate.

Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe" ([1Thess. 2:13](#)). The Thessalonians received the Word not just as an ordinary word, but they received it as the very Word of God. Paul said that when he gave out the Word of God ". . . my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" ([1Cor. 2:4](#)). We receive many letters from those who listen to our radio Bible study broadcasts, from folk who through the Word have been brought to a saving knowledge of Christ, brought to a place where they enjoy their Christian faith, and brought to a place where they enjoy prayer. That is the purpose of the Word of God -- it will have an effect upon you and your life.

It has been said, "The Word of God will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from the Word of God." A great many believers do not spend enough time in the Word of God. A great many preachers do not spend enough time in the Word of God. The greatest discipline a preacher can have is to go through the Bible book by book with his congregation. That is a discipline which even if it does not help the congregation, it will surely help the preacher. In every church which I have served as a pastor, I have gone through the Bible with the congregation. It surely helped me -- it was good for me. The Word of God is sharp; it is living and powerful and sharp.

"Piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit." There are many people who try to make a distinction between soul and spirit, devising some ingenious psychological division between the two. Do you know that only the Word of God can divide the soul and spirit? You and I cannot do that. When I talk about the soulish part of man and how God has given us the Holy Spirit, I suddenly find that I am no longer making a distinction between the soul and spirit -- only the Word of God can do that. There are times in the Scriptures when "soul" and "spirit" are used synonymously. There are other passages where it is clear that the soul and spirit are separate and are not the same thing. Only the Word of God can divide soul and spirit.

"Of the joints and marrow." The Word can get right down even in this flesh of ours and make a distinction (see [Ps. 32:3](#)).

"A discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." The Greek word for "discerner" actually means "critic." We have today many critics of the Word of God. However, the Word of God is the critic. It criticizes you. It criticizes me. No man is in a position to sit in judgment on the Word of God. There are many reasons for that, and one reason is that there is no other book like it. The Word of God was written over a period of fifteen hundred years, by about forty-five different authors, some of whom had never heard of the others. Yet they are all in agreement. They all present a glorious salvation. May I say to you, no man is in a position to sit in judgment on such a remarkable book.

I had an opportunity one time to listen to a very fine, brilliant, Shakespearean scholar. Many scholars are not humble, but this man was a very humble man. When he had finished his lecture he said, "Today I have attempted to give to you a critique of Shakespeare, but now I would like to say to you that I am in no position to sit in judgment on Shakespeare." It took a humble man to say that. Nor can any man sit in



judgment on the Bible, my friend. You really don't know enough to sit in judgment on this Book. This Book surely sits in judgment on us. It is sin that keeps men from Christ today. It is not intellectual problems of the head, but it is problems in the heart which keep men from God.

"A discernor [critic] of the thoughts and intents of the heart." You see, the Bible does not deal with acts primarily. What the hand does is because of what the heart thought. The heart had the action of the hand in hand before the hand got hold of it. Therefore the Word of God goes down and deals with the heart. The Lord Jesus said, "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" ([Matt. 15:19](#)). My, that's a filthy list, but that is what is in your heart and mine. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" ([Jer. 17:9](#)). No man can, but God does. The Word of God gets down and deals with the nitty-gritty of our hearts. It gets down and meets us right where the rubber meets the road, right down where you and I live and move and have our being.

Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do [[Heb. 4:13](#)].

You cannot conceal anything from God. I labored under the delusion as a young Christian that I would not let God in on everything in my life, even my plans. I prayed that He would give me certain things and do certain things for me, but I never let Him know my motives. I thought the prayer would sound better that way. To tell the truth, I didn't need to let Him know my motive because He knew it all the time. He is the one who knows the thoughts of the heart, and everything is open to Him. My friend, your life is an open book to Him. People ask me, "Do you think we ought to confess everything to Him?" Well, why not? He already knows -- you might just as well tell Him all about it.

### **Christ Is Superior To The Levitical Priesthood (4:3-13)**

Beginning with [verse 14](#) of this chapter through [verse 28](#) of chapter 7, the writer of this epistle is going to show that Christ is superior to the Levitical priesthood. This was very important for Hebrew believers to see because they were accustomed to approaching God through their high priest of the Levitical order, the priests who served first in the tabernacle and then in the temple. It was through them that they made their commitment to God and brought their sacrifices.

### **Our Great High Priest (4:14-16)**

The Lord Jesus Christ himself is our Great High Priest. Paul was so concerned and enthusiastic about the priesthood of Christ that way back in chapter 3 he said, "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus" ([Heb. 3:1](#)). He wanted to get the folk who were reading the epistle to immediately consider our High Priest. This is going to be the subject of much of the rest of the epistle, and, of course, there will be application of this great truth also.

Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession [[Heb. 4:14](#)].

Christ is our High Priest. The pagan notion of priesthood colors our thinking in reference to a priest. A pagan priest actually barred the approach to God, claiming possession of some mystical power essential to bringing an individual to God. A person had to go through this priest who claimed to have this particular access. That type of thing denies the finished work of Christ and the priesthood of all believers. The priesthood of all believers was one of the great truths which John Calvin emphasized. All of us need a priest -- we have a lack; we need help, and we all have our hang-ups. Job's heart-cry was, "Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both" ([Job 9:33](#)). Job longed for a mediator or priest who would stand between him and God, who would put one hand in Job's hand and his other hand in God's hand, and thus bring them together. Christ is that mediator, that priest, through whom every believer has personal access to God.

"We have a high priest, that is passed into the heavens." Let me say right away that the Lord Jesus Christ was not a priest while here on the earth. The only mention in Scripture of His ever making any kind of sacrifice (He never needed to make a sacrifice for Himself, of course) was the time He told Simon Peter to catch a fish and take the gold piece out of its mouth that He might pay a necessary temple tax from which the priests were exempt. He did that, I think, to make it very clear that He was not a priest here on earth. To be a priest you had to be born in the line of Aaron, of the tribe of Levi. The Lord Jesus was a member of the tribe of Judah. He was not in the priestly line. He was in the kingly line. When He was here on earth He came as a prophet speaking for God. He went back to heaven a priest to represent us to God. He became a priest when He ascended into heaven. He died down here to save us, and He lives up there to keep us saved. It is true that when He was here He offered Himself upon the Cross, and that is the function of a priest, but to be a priest to represent you and me He had to wait until He returned to heaven.

Christ occupies a threefold office: (1) He was a prophet when He came over nineteen hundred years ago -- that is the past; (2) He is a priest today -- that is for the present; and (3) He is coming someday to rule as a king -- that is for the future. He occupies all three of these offices, and He is the great subject of this Epistle to the Hebrews.

"Let us hold fast our profession" -- "profession" should be confession. Paul says, "Let us," to challenge us, to call us to do it, actually, to command us to do it. Let us hold fast our confession.

Notice that he does not say, "Let us hold fast our salvation." He is not talking about our salvation, but about our testimony, our witness down here. He is talking about our living for Christ. Christ died down here to save us, and He lives up yonder to keep us saved and to enable us to give a good witness. Some people say, "I can't live the Christian life." Well, I have news for you. It is true that you cannot live the Christian life, and God never asked you to live the Christian life. I have been thankful that He has not asked that of me because I have tried it, and it didn't work. We cannot do it in our own strength, but He asks that He might live it through us. He lives up yonder in order that you and I might hold fast to our confession, our testimony down here.

When we come to chapter 11 we will find a regular roll call of the heroes of the faith which shows what faith has done in the lives of men and women in all ages. All of those listed there had a good witness, a good report. Theirs was a good witness through faith -- they lived by faith.

For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin [[Heb. 4:15](#)].

You will notice in your Bible that the word yet is in italics, meaning that it has been added by the translators. Christ was tempted without sin -- tested without sin. In the testing of Jesus in the wilderness, He could not have fallen because He is the God-man. However, the pressure of testing was actually greater upon Him than it would be upon us. He could say, ". . . the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me" ([John 14:30](#)). Satan finds something in me and in you also, but he could find nothing in the Lord Jesus. Let me illustrate this for you: A boat standing in water can only tolerate so much pressure. If the pressure becomes too great, there will be a rip in the hull of the boat and water will come in, and thus the pressure is removed. That is the way you and I are -- we give in to the pressure, we yield, and then the pressure is gone. Jesus never did yield, and therefore there was a building up of pressure that you and I never experience. In the same way, the cars of a freight train all have a weight limit which they can carry. If that limit is exceeded, you will have a swaybacked car, one that is bowed down in the middle. It gives in -- it can only carry so heavy a load. That is true of all of us. We can carry just so much and not any more. May I say to you, the weight of temptation Jesus Christ could carry was infinite -- He was tested without sin. But He was tested, and for that reason He knows how we feel. We have a High Priest who understands us.

I have always felt that for the nation Israel the death of Aaron was in one sense of greater significance than the death of Moses. Aaron was their great high priest. Many Israelites had been brought up with Aaron, had played with him as a boy, and had gone through the wilderness with him. They could go to Aaron and say, "Look, Aaron, I did this, and I should not have done it. I have brought my sacrifice." And Aaron could sympathize with them. He knew exactly how they felt. But when Aaron died I imagine they wondered whether that new priest, the son of Aaron, would understand. Would he be able to sympathize and to help? We have a Great High Priest who is always available, and He does understand. He does not understand us theoretically, but down here He was tested, and He was "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." He knew what it was to hunger. He knew what it was to be touched with sorrow -- Jesus wept! He was "touched with the feeling of our infirmities . . . yet without sin."

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need [[Heb. 4:16](#)].

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace." I must confess that I have never really liked our translation of "boldly," but neither do I know how to change it. The word boldly has the thought of being brazen -- there is sort of a flippancy suggested by it -- or of being cocksure. That is really not the idea. It is a very interesting word in the Greek -- parrhesia. It denotes the freedom of speech which the Athenians prized so highly. They were perhaps the first to feel that the average citizen should have freedom to speak.

"Let us therefore come [with great freedom] unto the throne of grace." We can speak freely to the Lord Jesus Christ. I can tell Him things that I cannot tell you. He understands me. He knows my weaknesses, and I might just as well tell Him. I have learned to be very frank with Him. I have not attempted to become buddy-buddy with Him -- I despise that approach. He is God, and I come to Him in worship and with reverence. But I am free to speak, because He is also a man. He is God, but He is a man, and I can come to Him with great freedom. I can tell Him what is on my heart. I can open my heart to Him. I suspect, therefore, that all these very pious and flowery prayers we make are not impressive to Him -- especially when we are attempting to cover up what is in our hearts and lives. I wonder if the Lord doesn't tune us out when we do not come to Him with freedom and open our hearts to Him. That is one of the reasons our prayer meetings are not more effective. We come to Him rather restrained, without being open and sincere.

"Unto the throne of grace." God's throne is a throne of grace. Formerly a throne of judgment, it is now a mercy seat, a throne of grace.

"That we may obtain mercy." We need a lot of mercy. Mercy is something that is in one sense negative -- it speaks of the past. We are redeemed by the mercy of God. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us . . ." ([Titus 3:5](#)). He has been merciful to me.

"And find grace to help in time of need." Help is a very positive thing -- it speaks of the future. We may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. David wrote, "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want" ([Ps. 23:1](#)). I have noticed that one of the newer translations reads, "The LORD is my shepherd; I have not wanted." How ridiculous! Of course, he had not wanted in the past, but the beauty of it is that David could say, "I shall not want." Why? Because the Lord is my Shepherd. I have a High Priest up yonder, and I can go to Him as my Shepherd.

By the way, have you been to Him yet today? What did you tell Him? Did you tell Him that you love Him? Did you confess your sins to Him? Well, why don't you? He already knows it, but why don't you tell Him? Don't put up a front to Him. He already knows that you can come to Him only on His merit. Go to Him with freedom and talk to Him -- there is mercy and grace to help in time of need.

## Chapter 5

**THEME:** Definition of a priest

This chapter continues the great theme of Christ as our High Priest, showing that He is superior to the Levitical priesthood, with which the Hebrews were so familiar.

In the first ten verses we have the definition of a priest. Christ, as we have already said, has the threefold office of prophet, priest, and king. He is God's final word to man. In Christ God has said all He intends to say. As a prophet, He spoke over nineteen hundred years ago. Now He is the Word of God. He is the priest for the now generation. Someday

in the future He is going to come as king. Right now He is our Great High Priest. We have access to Him. He is a Great High Priest, just as Aaron was a great high priest.

And every believer is a priest, just as all the tribe of Levi were priests. We can offer sacrifices to God as priests. Praise is a sacrifice that we can offer. Have you praised Him today? We can also offer our substance, the fruit of our hands, the fruit of our minds, or our time. Believers can make all of these things an offering to Him. And prayer is the work of a priest. To recognize our position and privilege eliminates all of the mechanics we have today. It puts aside all of the methods that we use. We see two extreme approaches to God through worship today. One is a very emotional approach, and the other is a very ritualistic approach. Both of them are soulish and not spiritual worship at all. We simply need to come to Him and get rid of all the mechanics and the methods.

Someone sent me a story about the astronaut who was in his capsule just ready to close the door in preparation for the launching, when a reporter asked him a question. Reporters, I have observed, sometimes ask some rather asinine questions. This reporter asked, "How do you feel when you are an astronaut ready to take off?" The astronaut replied, "How would you feel if you were sitting on top of fifty thousand parts, each supplied by the lowest bidder?" That is the way many people worship today. They are ritualistic or they are emotional; they go by their feelings rather than by the Word of God.

The concluding verse of chapter 4 urges us to come in freedom to the throne of grace. We need mercy and we need help. He is in the position to supply these because He is our Great High Priest.

### **Definition Of A Priest (5:1-10)**

For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins [[Heb. 5:1](#)].

This verse gives us the definition of a priest. He must be taken from among men, which means he must be a man. He must be a representative, you see. He represents man, but he represents man to God. He is ordained for man in things pertaining to God. Because he goes before God, he must be acceptable to God. That is the suggestion in "is ordained for men in things . . . to God." In [verse 4](#) we are told specifically that no man takes this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. He must be ordained of God. Therefore a priest is: (1) taken from among men; (2) ordained for men (on behalf of men); and (3) goes to God for men.

We can now draw a distinction between a priest and a prophet. A priest goes from man to God; he represents man before God. A prophet comes from God to man with a message from God. Therefore the Old Testament priest did not tell men what God had to say -- that was the ministry of the prophet. The priest's ministry was to represent man before God. Now in the present age our Lord Jesus Christ is the only priest. It is He who represents us before God.

The priesthood functions, not for lost sinners, but for saved sinners. You will recall that John said, "My little children [my little born ones], these things write I unto you, that ye sin not . . ." ([1John 2:1](#)). Well, I'm sorry, John, but you are talking to a boy who has

sinned. Even as a child of God I have sinned. I am thankful that he covered me when he added, "And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Christ represents me up there. When my enemy, Satan, accuses me before the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ represents me. He is my High Priest. That is one reason why I would never be satisfied just to have a priest on earth. I want to make this very clear, and I am not attempting to be critical. If someone is going to represent me before God, I want to be sure that he is acceptable to God. Is he one who has accreditation? Has he passed his bar examination so he can represent me in heaven? We can pray for one another, but we cannot represent one another in heaven. But because I need somebody to represent me, I am very happy that I have my Great High Priest who represents me before the Father.

"That he may offer both gifts and sacrifices." Notice that the priest may offer both gifts and sacrifices. The writer is going to make it abundantly clear that He had something to offer: He offered Himself. Compared to the precious blood of Christ which has redeemed us, silver and gold would be like lead or dirt.

"That he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins" -- notice that it is sins, not sin; it is plural. It speaks of the life of the believer. For example, when you lost your temper, did you go to God and confess that sin? You have a representative who is there to make intercession for you. He represents you before God.

[Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity \[Heb. 5:2\].](#)

We have a Great High Priest who could say, when He came to the end of His ministry on earth, "Which of you convinceth [convicts] me of sin? . . ." ([John 8:46](#)). The Lord's disciples had been with Him for three years, and if there had been anything wrong, they would have known. He was impeccable; He did not commit any sin. Yet because He lived on this earth as a man, He understands us.

He "can have compassion on the ignorant." What does that mean? "Compassion on the ignorant" refers to sins of ignorance. [Leviticus 4:1-2](#) deals with these sins. If you don't think you have committed a sin in the past few days, and you feel like you have really been living in the heights, I have news for you. You commit sins that you are not even aware of, and He, our Great High Priest, takes care of that for us. He can have compassion on the ignorant. You see, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" ([Prov. 14:12](#), italics mine). "All we like sheep have gone astray . . ." ([Isa. 53:6](#)). God compares us to sheep, because all sheep go astray.

"He himself also is compassed with infirmity." Aaron was touched with infirmity or weakness, but Christ was touched with a feeling of our infirmity or weakness. He knows how we feel about things. He is the perfect mediator, you see. When we fall, He doesn't get down in the dirt with us; He is there to lift us out of it.

The trouble with Aaron was that he might condone the sins that he also had committed. Or he might condemn the sins that he had not committed himself. That would always be a danger. But Christ is able to show mercy, and He neither condones nor condemns. When



we come to Him to make confession of our sins, He doesn't give us a little lecture about doing better next time. He just extends mercy to us. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just [as our High Priest] to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" ([1John 1:9](#)). It is wonderful to have a High Priest like He is!

Now we see a contrast between Aaron and Christ because there is no counterpart of this requirement of the Aaronic priesthood in our Lord Jesus Christ.

And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins [[Heb. 5:3](#)].

You will recall that on the great Day of Atonement Aaron first brought a sacrifice and took the blood into the Holy of Holies for his own sins. He had to have his own sin question settled first before he could represent the people. There is no counterpart of this in Christ. Christ did not have to make an offering for Himself. He made an offering for you and me.

And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron [[Heb. 5:4](#)].

As we saw earlier, Christ was a priest because He was acceptable to God.

So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee [[Heb. 5:5](#)].

I want to make it abundantly clear that the "begotten" here has nothing to do with the birth of Christ in Bethlehem. It has everything to do with the garden near Calvary where He was buried after His crucifixion because that is where His resurrection took place. He was begotten from the dead. His priesthood began when he went back to heaven, and that speaks of His resurrection.

As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec [[Heb. 5:6](#)].

The order of Aaron is not adequate to set before us the priesthood of Christ. So our Lord is not a High Priest in the order of Aaron, although Aaron is the type, and Christ the antitype. Christ is the Son, and Aaron is just a servant.

"Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." Who is Melchisedec (spelled Melchizedek in the Old Testament)? The only historical record that we have of him is in [Genesis 14](#) where he is described as a "priest of the most high God." He went out to congratulate Abraham on his victory over Chedorlaomer and his allies in which Abraham recovered all of the citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah, including his nephew Lot, and also brought back all the booty. The king of Sodom met Abraham and offered him all of the booty. Abraham was under some temptation, but he turned down the offer. In [Genesis 14:18](#) we read, "And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God." The account continues in [Genesis 14:19-20](#), "And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all." We are told that Melchizedek was the king of Salem

(Salem means "peace") and he was also king of righteousness. He walks out onto the pages of Scripture out of nowhere -- we have no inkling where he came from -- and he walks off the page of Scripture the same way. There is no other historical mention of him.

In [Psalm 110](#) we see the prophecy of Melchizedek -- that there is coming one who is to be a priest after the order of Melchizedek. Hebrews now gives us the interpretation of Melchizedek.

Let me say at this point that there are some very fine expositors who think that Melchizedek is the preincarnate Christ. Well, I cannot accept that interpretation because Melchizedek is a type, of the Lord Jesus. Obviously, the antitype cannot be the type -- or you wouldn't have a type. Therefore, I interpret Melchizedek as a human being who was the literal king of Salem. Two excellent expositors, G. Campbell Morgan and Lewis Sperry Chafer, hold that he was the preincarnate Christ; so you will be in good company if you take that position.

However, I believe Melchizedek was a type given to us by Moses and guarded by God. He just walks out of nowhere and walks back into nowhere. He had no beginning or ending of days. The Lord Jesus Christ is the beginning and the end. He is Alpha and Omega (see [Rev. 1:8](#)). He started it all, and He will end it all. He is the AMEN. He is the One who is the eternal God and as such has no beginning or ending. The writer is telling us that we have a priest like that -- He is after the order of Melchizedek. We will see an interpretation of this in chapter 7.

This brings us to a verse that I feel totally inadequate to deal with. I feel that I am just standing on the fringe in my understanding of it.

Speaking of the Lord Jesus --

[Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared \[\[Heb. 5:7\]\(#\)\].](#)

Scripture tells us that on three occasions Jesus wept. I am of the opinion there were other occasions, but the record gives us only three. One was at the tomb of Lazarus. At that time, although He knew He would restore Lazarus to life, His heart went out in sympathy to the two sisters who were so deeply grieved. Because He wept for them, I know how He feels when you and I stand at the graveside of a loved one.

At another time He wept over the city of Jerusalem. Since He wept over Jerusalem at that time, I am sure He has wept many times over the cities in which you and I live. They certainly provide Him with reasons for weeping!

Then the third time He wept was in the Garden of Gethsemane. Why did He weep there? A cynic and unbeliever made the statement that he wished he had been present so he could have killed the Lord Jesus in some way other than by crucifixion. In saying this, it is evident that he perceived something that some believers do not firmly grasp. He would have liked to have kept Jesus from the Cross, which is exactly what the Devil wanted to do. I believe that Satan attempted to slay the Lord Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.

When He prayed in the garden, "Let this cup pass from me" (see [Luke 22:42](#)), the "cup" was death. He did not want to die in the Garden of Gethsemane.

"And was heard in that he feared." If our Lord Jesus prayed in the garden to let the cup pass because He didn't want to die on the Cross, then He wasn't heard -- because He did die on the Cross. My friend, He was heard; He did not die in the Garden of Gethsemane.

You see, prophecy had made it abundantly clear that He was to die on a cross. We do not have a better picture of crucifixion than in [Psalm 22](#). The Cross was an altar on which the Son of God shed His blood, paying the penalty for your sin and my sin. "The life of the flesh is in the blood," God said, "and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls . . ." ([Lev. 17:11](#)). In the Old Testament the blood of animal sacrifices only covered over the sin, but the blood of Christ was given "to make atonement for your souls." Christ shed His blood on the Cross, which was an altar. He told Nicodemus, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up" ([John 3:14](#)). He did not want to die in the garden. That, I think, was His prayer, His human prayer, as He wept and sweat great drops of blood. Our Lord was near death as He approached the Cross, and He prayed to be delivered from death so that He could reach the Cross. And we are told that He "was heard in that he feared."

"In that he feared" -- fear is not something that is always wrong, as we have seen elsewhere in this epistle. It would be abnormal not to fear some things. And I think we need a little more fear in our churches; we need the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom. The Lord Jesus feared.

Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things  
which he suffered;

And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation  
unto all them that obey him [[Heb. 5:8-9](#)].

"And being made perfect" -- that is, made complete, made full.

"Eternal salvation" -- the only kind of salvation He offers is eternal. If you can lose it tomorrow, then, my friend, it is not eternal. It is some other kind of salvation. But He offers only eternal salvation.

"Unto all them that obey him." What is obedience? A crowd of people asked Jesus, ". . . What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" ([John 6:28](#)). Jesus replied, ". . . This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent" ([John 6:29](#)). Do you want to obey God? Then trust Christ. That is what He is saying.

But there is something here that I do not understand -- I am frank to admit it. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." Why did the Son of God need to learn obedience by suffering? And why did He need to be made perfect when He already was perfect? I stand here in the presence of a mystery, a mystery that I cannot fathom. I know only that God got something out of the death of Christ that has made heaven more wonderful and has added something to heaven where everything is perfection and that the Son of God has learned something!

Now I am well acquainted with the explanation that men gave, but none of them satisfy me. I just recognize that it is a great mystery. Christ took upon Himself our humanity, and in that humanity He obeyed God. He said, "I have come to do my Father's will" (see [John 6:39](#)). Paul said of Him, ". . . [He] took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" ([Phil. 2:7-8](#), italics mine). My friend, I want you to know that when I die (if the Lord tarries) I won't do it obediently. I don't want to die. I think it is morbid when folk always talk about wanting to die. I want to live on earth as long as I can. When I had cancer, many people wrote to me and said, "We are praying for you. We are asking that the Lord spare your life." I am thankful because the Lord heard those prayers. But one dear lady in Southern California wrote to me and said, "I am not praying that the Lord will leave you here. I know you are ready to go, so I am praying that He will take you home." I wrote back to her in a hurry and said, "Listen, you let the Lord alone in this matter. It is just between Him and me. I don't want you to tell the Lord when you think He ought to take me home. I want to stay here, and I'll appreciate it if you don't pray that prayer any more. At least, change it. Tell the Lord that you made a mistake, and that McGee wants to stay."

When the writer to the Hebrews says that Christ learned obedience by the things which he suffered, I don't understand it. I simply recognize that I am in the presence of a mystery -- that even my Lord learned something!

Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec [[Heb. 5:10](#)].

Called means "saluted" and refers to Melchizedek.

Now the writer will discuss this matter of the priesthood of Christ, that Melchizedek was given to us in the Old Testament as a type of the high priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

### **The Peril Of Dull Hearing (5:11-14)**

The writer puts up the third danger signal; it is like a red light flashing. He is getting ready to bring us out on the highway, but before he does, we've got to look both ways. There is the danger of being dull of hearing. He devotes the remainder of the chapter to this, because in the next chapter (after still another danger signal) he will deal with the great subject of Christ our High Priest after the order of Melchizedek.

Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing [[Heb. 5:11](#)].

"Of whom we have many things to say." The writer says, "I still have a lot of things to say."

"And hard to be uttered." Why is it hard to be uttered?

"Seeing ye are dull of hearing." The writer, who I think was Paul, could state it all right, but they couldn't grasp it.

Have you ever said to your husband or wife after a Bible-teaching sermon, "I don't think the pastor was quite up to it today. I didn't feel his message was equal to what he is capable of giving"? Did you ever stop to think that the problem that day may have been with you? Are you dull of hearing? The problem may not be in the speaking, but the problem may be in the hearing.

Ear trouble, today, is the big problem of believers. Christ as a priest after the order of Melchizedek is a difficult subject, and the writer is going to deal with it forthrightly. To understand the subject requires sharp spiritual perception. It requires folk to be spiritually alert and to have a knowledge of the Word of God and to be close to it. The Hebrew believers who are being addressed here had a low SQ, not an IQ, but an SQ -- spiritual quotient. It was hard to teach them because it was difficult to make them understand. They were babies, as many of the saints are today, and they want baby talk even from the preacher. They don't want to hear anything that is difficult to understand. This is the reason some preachers are getting by with murder in the pulpit -- they murder the Word of God. They absolutely kill it and substitute something from their own viewpoint, and the congregations like that kind of baby talk.

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat [[Heb. 5:12](#)].

"Ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God." Some of them want a D.D. degree, but they don't even know their ABCs. "First principles" is from the Greek word stoicheion (from which we get our English word atom, by the way), meaning "primary elements" -- the ABCs of the Christian life. They ought to be teachers and mature saints, but instead they are still little babies needing someone to burp them.

For example, one Sunday after the morning service a church member stopped to talk to me while I was shaking hands with folk who were leaving. He said, "Dr. McGee, do you have anything against me?" I said, "No. Why do you say that?" "Well, you passed me yesterday on the street, and you didn't speak to me." That is baby talk. I didn't even see that person, and it is perfect nonsense to talk like that. Someone else said, "Why didn't the soloist sing this morning? We wanted to hear the soloist sing." Oh, my gracious, what little babies, wanting their rattles, and wanting the bottle with the nipple on it!

To these Hebrew believers the writer says, "You are such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. You are not of age; you are not full grown; you haven't reached maturation." Now a baby cannot eat meat, but an adult can enjoy milk. I will admit that a lot of saints today sit and listen to baby talk from the pulpit. It is tragic indeed that they have to endure this, but they do.

For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe [[Heb. 5:13](#)].

He doesn't know the Word of God.

I don't want to step on your toes, my friend, but I'd love to be helpful to you. You cannot grow apart from the Word of God. I don't care how active you are in the church. You may be an officer. You may be on every committee in the church. You may be a leading deacon or elder. I don't care who you are, or what you are; if you are not studying the Word of God, and if you don't know how to handle it, you are a little baby. It is tragic to occupy a church office when you are just a little baby. You ought to come on and grow up. It is tragic that there are people who have been members of the church and have been saved for years, and they are still going around saying, "Goo, goo, goo." They have nothing to contribute but little baby talk. All they want is to be burped periodically.

But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil [[Heb. 5:14](#)].

In [1Corinthians 3:1-2](#), Paul says, "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able." In [1Peter 2:1-2](#), Peter says, "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."

## Chapter 6

**THEME:** Danger signal: peril of departing

This chapter, by all odds, contains the most difficult passage in the Bible for an interpreter to handle, regardless of his theological position. Dr. R. W. Dale, one of the great minds in the earlier field of conservative scholarship, wrote:

I know how this passage has made the heart of many a good man tremble. It rises up in the New Testament with a gloomy grandeur, stern, portentous, awful, sublime as Mount Sinai when the Lord descended upon it in fire, and threatening storm clouds were around Him, and thunderings and lightnings and unearthly voices told that He was there.

Every reverent person has come to this section with awe and wonder. And every sincere expositor has come to this passage with a sense of inadequacy, and certainly that is the way I approach it.

### **Danger Signal: Peril Of Departing (6:1-20)**

In the previous chapter the danger signal was the peril of dull hearing. Now as the Hebrew Christians can already see persecution coming, there is a danger of their turning from their confession of Christ and going back to Judaism. He mentions the baby things of Judaism which had to do with ritual. He encourages them to grow up, to go on to maturity.

Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God [[Heb. 6:1](#)].



"Leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ" is literally "leaving the word of the beginning concerning Christ." For a builder it means to leave the foundation and go up with the scaffolding, or for a child in school to go on from his ABCs to work on his B.A. or Ph.D. It is preparing believers for a trip up to the throne of God.

"Let us go on" is horizontal, not perpendicular.

"Unto perfection" is maturity, full age.

There are six foundational facts in the Old Testament which prefigure Christ in ritual, symbol, and ceremony: (1) repentance from dead works; (2) faith toward God; (3) doctrine of baptisms; (4) laying on of hands; (5) resurrection of the dead; and (6) eternal judgment.

"Repentance from dead works." The works were the works of the Mosaic Law. They were continually trying to keep the Law, then breaking it, then repenting. That is baby stuff, the writer tells them.

"And of faith toward God." The Old Testament taught faith toward God; so just to say you believe in God doesn't mean you have come very far. The Old Testament ritual presented a faith in God by approaching Him through the temple sacrifices, not through Christ as High Priest.

Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment [[Heb. 6:2](#)].

"Doctrine of baptisms [washings]" has nothing to do with New Testament baptism. They refer to the washings of the Old Testament ritual, and there were many of them. The Hebrew believers were wanting to return to these things which were only shadows; they were the negatives from which the spiritual pictures were developed. They prefigured Christ, the reality.

"Laying on of hands." This was also an Old Testament ritual. When a man brought an animal offering, he laid his hands on its head to signify his identification with it. The animal was taking his place on the altar of sacrifice.

"Resurrection of the dead" was taught in the Old Testament, but now they needed to come up to the resurrection of Christ and to the living Christ.

"Eternal judgment" was taught in the Old Testament.

And this will we do, if God permit [[Heb. 6:3](#)].

This brings us to that passage which has caused as many difficulties as any in the Scriptures. Some consider it the most difficult passage to interpret.

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,

And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,

If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance;  
seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put  
him to an open shame.

For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it,  
and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed,  
receiveth blessing from God:

But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh  
unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.

But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things  
that accompany salvation, though we thus speak [[Heb. 6:4-9](#)].

[Verse 9](#) is the key to the passage, but we need the context to understand what is being said.

As we study this section, we are immediately confronted with the amazing fact that generally commentators have avoided this chapter. Even such a man as Dr. G. Campbell Morgan, the prince of expositors, has completely bypassed it in his book on Hebrews. However, when we do come upon the interpretations available and summarize each, we can well understand why men have chosen to remain clear of this scene of confusion because we can get many interpretations.

In the interest of an honest search after the evident meaning of these verses, let us examine some of the interpretations.

The most unsatisfactory to me of all interpretations is that the Christians mentioned here are Christians who have lost their salvation. That is, they were once saved but have lost their salvation. There are many folk who hold this position, and for the most part they are real born again Christians themselves. However, this belief makes them as uncomfortable as I am when I am making a trip by plane. I know that I am just as safe on that plane as anyone there, but I do not enjoy it as some of them do. There are many folk today who are not sure about their salvation and therefore are not enjoying it. Nevertheless they are saved if they have fixed their trust in Christ as their Savior. The essential thing is not the amount of faith they have but the One to whom it is directed. They turn to this passage of Scripture more than any other since they deny that we have a sure salvation which cannot be lost and that the believer is safe in Christ.

I want to make it abundantly clear that I believe we have a sure salvation because Scripture is very emphatic on this point. Paul says in [Romans 8:1](#): "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus . . ." and, my friend, he expands that great truth to the triumphant climax of such a bold statement as, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth" ([Rom. 8:33](#)). The throne of God is back of the weakest, humblest man who has come to trust Christ, and today there is not a created intelligence in God's universe that can bring a charge against one of these who is justified through faith in His blood. Paul continues in [Romans 8:34-39](#): "Who is he that condemneth? [1] It is Christ that died, [2] yea rather, that is risen again, [3] who is even at the right hand of God, [4] who also maketh intercession for us." My friend, if you drink in those words you will have a great foundation of assurance. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or

nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." Does that satisfy you? Well, let's keep going. Paul is not through yet. "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Can you mention anything that Paul didn't mention in this passage? Can you find anything that could separate you from the love of Christ? May I say to you, this list takes in the whole kit and caboodle. Here we have a guarantee that nothing can separate us from the love of God -- nothing that is seen, nothing that is unseen, nothing that is natural, nothing that is supernatural can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Lord Jesus Christ also makes some tremendous statements about our absolute security. Listen to Him, trust in Him, and believe Him. The Word of God is living and powerful, my friend. Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life" ([John 10:27-28](#)). What kind of life? Eternal life. If you can lose it, it is not eternal! "And they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand" ([John 10:28-29](#)). It is not a question of your ability to hold on to Him; it is His ability to hold on to you. He says here with the infinite wisdom and full authority of the Godhead that He can hold us and that they who trust Him shall never perish. The question is: Is your hope fixed in God who is all-powerful, or in a god who may suffer defeat?

I have cited only some of the passages of Scripture that make it abundantly clear that you and I cannot be lost after we have been born again into the family of God. We become children of God through faith in Christ. Once a person has become a child of God through faith in Christ he has eternal life. I cannot accept the interpretation that the people in [Hebrews 6:4-9](#) were once saved and had lost their salvation.

There is a second interpretation that has some merit in it. There are those who contend that this is a hypothetical case. "If they shall fall away." There is only a possibility that this might happen. The writer does not say that it happens, only that it might be possible. Those who contend that this is the correct interpretation say that it is the biggest "IF" in the Bible, and I would agree with them. If I did not take another position on the interpretation of this passage in Hebrews, I would accept this one.

The third interpretation points out that in [verse 6](#) there really is no "if" in the Greek. It is a participle and should be translated "having fallen away." Therefore these folk have another interpretation, which is that the passage speaks of mere professors, that they are not genuine believers. They only profess to be Christians. Well, I cannot accept this view, although such scholars as Matthew Henry, F. W. Grant, and J. N. Darby hold this thinking, as does C. I. Scofield in his excellent reference Bible -- a Bible which I feel every Christian should own, although in some cases I do not concur with the interpretations given in the notes, as in the instance before us.

I do not accept the view that these folk are professors rather than genuine believers. The Bible does speak of those who merely profess Christ. There are apostates in the church. For instance Peter in his second epistle wrote: "It has happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire" ([2Pet. 2:22](#), ASV). Those folk were professors, not genuine believers. But in chapter 6 we find genuine believers, because they are identified as such in many ways. If you will move back into chapter 4 to get the entire passage, you will notice that it is said of these people that they are dull of hearing (see [Heb. 5:11](#)) -- it does not say that they are dead in trespasses and sins (see [Eph. 2:1](#)). And in [Hebrews 5:12](#) it says that "when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you . . . and are become such as have need of milk. . . ." They need to have milk because they are babes. An unsaved person doesn't need milk; he needs life. He needs to be born again. He is dead in trespasses and sins. After he is born again, a little milk will help him. Therefore I believe the writer to the Hebrews is addressing baby Christians, and he is urging them to go on to maturity.

There are other expositors who take the position that since the ones spoken of here are Jewish believers of the first century, the warning can apply only to them. At the time Hebrews was written, the temple was still standing, and the writer is warning Jewish Christians about returning to the sacrificial system, because in so doing, they would be admitting that Jesus did not die for their sins. Therefore, those who hold this reasoning say that [verses 4-6](#) apply only to the Jewish Christians of that day and have no reference to anyone in our day.

There is still another group which stresses the word impossible in [Hebrews 6:4](#). It is impossible to renew them -- the thought being that it is impossible for man, but it is not impossible with God. They remind us that the Lord Jesus said that ". . . It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" ([Matt. 19:24](#)). Of course it is impossible for any of us to enter heaven on our own; we must have a Savior, a Redeemer. Therefore, this again is an interpretation that I cannot accept.

You can see that there are many interpretations of this passage -- and, of course, there are others which I have not mentioned.

Now there is one interpretation that has been a real blessing to my heart, and I trust you will follow me patiently, thoughtfully, and without bias as we look at it. Because I was dissatisfied with all the interpretations I had heard, I actually felt sad about it. Then several years ago I picked up a copy of Bibliotheca Sacra, a publication of the Dallas Theological Seminary, and read an article on the sixth chapter of Hebrews written by Dr. J. B. Rowell, who was then pastor of the Central Baptist Church in Victoria, British Columbia. His interpretation was the best that I had heard. I give him full credit for it. This is not something that I thought of, although I have developed it to fit my own understanding, of course.

First of all, let me call to your attention that the writer is not discussing the question of salvation at all in this passage. I believe he is describing saved people -- they have been enlightened, they have tasted of the heavenly gift, they have been made partakers of the

Holy Spirit, and they have tasted the good Word of God and the powers of the world to come.

The whole tenor of the text reveals that he is speaking of rewards which are the result of salvation. In [verse 6](#) he says, "If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance" -- not to salvation, but to repentance. Repentance is something that God has asked believers to do. For example, read the seven letters to the seven churches in Asia, as recorded in [Revelation 2](#) and [Revelation 3](#). He says to every one of the churches to repent. That is His message for believers.

So the writer of Hebrews is talking about the fruit of salvation, not about the root of salvation. Notice [verse 9](#) again: "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation [he hasn't been discussing salvation but the things that accompany salvation], though we thus speak." He is speaking of the fruit of the Christian's life and the reward that comes to him as the result. The whole tenor of this passage is that he is warning them of the possibility of losing their reward. There is danger, Paul said, of our entire works being burned up so that we will have nothing for which we could be rewarded. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" ([1Cor. 3:11-15](#)). The work of every believer, my friend, is going to be tested by fire, and fire burns! The work you are doing today for Christ is going to be tested by fire. For example, when all of those reports that some of us preachers have handed in about how many converts we have made are tried by fire, they will make a roaring fire -- if our work has been done in the flesh rather than in the power of the Spirit. We will have nothing but wood, hay, and stubble that will all go up in smoke.

Someday every believer is going to stand before the judgment seat of Christ. I wish I could lay upon the heart of believers that it is not going to be a sweet little experience where the Lord Jesus is going to pat us on the back and say, "You nice little Sunday school boy, you didn't miss a Sunday for ten years. You are so wonderful." The Lord is going to go deeper than that. He is going to test you and see if you really had any fruit in your life. Have you grown in grace and knowledge of Him? Have you been a witness for Him? Has your life counted for Him? Have you been a blessing to others? My Christian friend, I am not sure that I am looking forward to the judgment seat of Christ, because He is going to take Vernon McGee apart there. I will not be judged for salvation, but because I am saved, He is going to find out whether or not I am to receive a reward.

Now notice that he is illustrating the fruit of the Christian's life: "For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned" ([vv. 7-8](#)). If the believer's life brings forth fruit, it receives blessing from God; if it brings forth thorns and briers, it is rejected.

When the apostle Paul wrote to Titus, a young preacher, he dealt with the matter of works: "Not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy he saved us . . ." ([Titus 3:5](#), ASV). From this, one might be inclined to think that Paul is not going to have much regard for good works, but move down in that same chapter to [verse 8](#): ". . . I desire that thou affirm confidently, to the end that they who have believed God may be careful to maintain good works. . . ." Good works do not enter into the matter of salvation, but when one becomes a child of God through faith in Christ, works assume supreme importance. My friend, if you are a Christian, it is important that you live the Christian life.

When I was a university student the psychologists were discussing a matter which they have moved away from now. It was: Which is more important, heredity or environment? Well, my psychology professor had a stimulating answer. He said that before you are born, heredity is more important, but after you are born, environment is the major consideration! Now let's carry that line of thought over to our present study. Before you are born again, works do not enter in, because you cannot bring them to God -- He won't accept them. Scripture says that the righteousness of man is filthy rags in His sight (see [Isa. 64:6](#)). You don't expect God to accept a pile of dirty laundry, do you? He is accepting sinners, but He accepts us on the basis of the redemption that we have in Christ. When we receive Christ as Savior, we are born anew and become a child of God. When that happens, we are, as Peter put it, ". . . an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" ([1Pet. 2:9](#), ASV). Now after you have been saved, you are to show forth by your good works before the world that you are redeemed to God. Therefore the Christian has something to show forth, and that is the thing which is to be judged. If he is going to continue as a baby and be nothing but a troublemaker, turning people from Christ instead of to Christ, there will certainly be no reward. In fact, there will be shame at His appearing.

"For as touching those who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, and then fell away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame" ([vv. 4-6](#), ASV). These verses bring us to the very center of this study.

"And then fell away" -- fell away is an interesting word in the Greek. It is *parapito* and means simply "to stumble, to fall down." It would be impossible to give it the meaning of "apostatize." It is the same word used of our Lord when He went into the Garden of Gethsemane, fell on His face, and prayed.

There are many examples in Scripture of men who "fell away." The apostle Peter fell, but he was not lost. The Lord Jesus said to him, "I have prayed that your faith might not fail" (see [Luke 22:32](#)). Peter suffered loss, but he was not lost. John Mark is another example. He failed so miserably on the first missionary journey that when his uncle Barnabas suggested that he go on the second journey, Paul turned him down. He as much as said, "Never. This boy has failed, and as far as I am concerned, I am through with him" (see [Acts 15:37-39](#)). Well, thank God, although he stumbled and fell, God was not through with him. Even the apostle Paul, before he died, acknowledged that he had made a



misjudgment of John Mark. In his last epistle he wrote, ". . . Take Mark and bring him with thee; for he is useful to me for ministering" ([2Tim. 4:11](#)). Now, neither Peter nor John Mark lost his salvation, but they certainly failed and they suffered loss for it.

Read again [verse 1](#) and notice that the writer is talking to folk about repentance from dead works -- not salvation, but repentance. You will recall that John the Baptist also preached this to the people: "Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance . . ." ([Luke 3:8](#)). He was referring to that which is the evidence of repentance. Repentance in our day does not mean the shedding of a few tears; it means turning right-about-face toward Jesus Christ, which means a change of direction in your life, in your way of living.

Many of the Jewish believers were returning to the temple sacrifice at that time, and the writer to the Hebrews was warning them of the danger of that. Before Christ came, every sacrifice was a picture of Him and pointed to His coming, but after Christ came and died on the Cross, that which God had commanded in the Old Testament actually became sin.

You see, those folk were at a strategic point in history. The day before the crucifixion of Jesus they had gone to the temple with sacrifices in obedience to God's command, but now it was wrong for them to do it. Why? Because Jesus had become that sacrifice -- once and for all. Today if you were to offer a bloody sacrifice, you would be sacrificing afresh the Lord Jesus because you would be implying that when He died nineteen hundred years ago it was of no avail -- that you still need a sacrifice to take care of your sin. It would mean that you would not have faith in His atonement, in His death, in His redemption. As someone has said, we either crucify or crown the Lord Jesus by our lives. Today we exhibit either a life of faith or a life by which we crucify Him afresh -- especially when we feel that we have to get back under the Mosaic system and keep the Law in order to be saved. It is a serious matter to go back to a legal system.

Notice again [verse 6](#) as the Authorized Version translates it: ". . . if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance." Actually the if is not in the text at all. It is "having fallen away," or "then fell away" -- a genitive absolute. It is all right to use the "if," providing you use it as an argument rather than in the sense of a condition.

Why would it be impossible to renew them again unto repentance? Remember we are talking about the fruit of salvation. It is a serious thing to have accepted Christ as Savior and then to live in sin, to nullify what you do by being a spiritual baby, never growing up, doing nothing in the world but building a big pile of wood, hay, and stubble. Paul said the same thing in different language in [1Corinthians 3:11](#) which says, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Your salvation is a foundation. You rest upon it, but you also build upon it. You can build with six different kinds of materials -- wood, hay, stubble, gold, silver, and precious stones. What kind of building materials are you using today? Are you building up a lot of wood, hay, and stubble? There is a lot of church work today that is nothing but that. We are great on organizations and committees, but do our lives really count for God? Are there going to be people in heaven who will be able to point to you and say, "I am here because of your life and testimony," or, "I am here because you gave me the Word of God." Oh, let's guard against building with wood, hay, or stubble!

By the way, there is a difference between a straw stack and a diamond ring. And you can lose a diamond ring in a haystack because the ring is so small. I am afraid that a great many folk are building a straw stack to make an impression. One pastor told me, "I'm killing myself. I have to turn in a better report this year than the report last year. We have to increase church membership and converts and giving to missions." Oh, if this pastor would only dig into the Scriptures and spend much time in God's presence. Then he would be teaching his people the Word and many would be turning to Christ and would be growing in their relationship with Him. Every man's works are going to be tested by fire. What will fire do to wood, hay, and stubble? Poof! It will go up in smoke. There will be nothing left. That is what the writer is saying.

In [John 15](#) the Lord Jesus talks about the fact that He is the vine, the genuine vine, and we are the branches. We are to bear fruit. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit . . ." ([John 15:7-8](#)). He wants us to bear much fruit. When there is a branch that won't bear fruit, what does He do? "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned" ([John 15:6](#)). He will take it away; He will remove it from the place of fruitbearing and that is what the Lord Jesus is saying.

I see God doing this very thing today. And as I look back over the years, I have seen many men work with wood, hay, or stubble. And I have seen others work with gold. I know a layman who was a very prominent Christian when I came to the Los Angeles area almost forty years ago. Then he became involved in a dishonest transaction. He has lost his testimony, and yet he was a very gifted and likeable man. I still consider him my friend, but I wouldn't want to go into the presence of Christ as this man will have to go when his life is over.

Also I recall a minister who was very attractive -- a little too attractive. He was unfaithful to his wife, had an affair with another woman, and finally divorced his wife. And all the while he tried to keep on teaching! But his teaching didn't amount to anything -- he was just putting up a whole lot of straw. He was not even baling hay; he was just making a big old haystack. Finally the match was put to it, I guess, because he certainly didn't leave anything down here.

Oh, how careful we should be about our Christian lives. And we cannot live the Christian life in our own strength. We need to recognize that Christ is the Vine. If we have any life, it has come from Him, and if there is any fruit in our lives, it comes from Him. We are sort of connecting rods, as branches connect into the vine and then bear fruit. Christ said that, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me" ([John 15:4](#)).

"If they shall fall away" or "having fallen away," it is impossible to renew them to repentance. They can shed tears all they want to, but they have lost their testimony. For example, a preacher came and talked to me about his situation. He moved away from this area and attempted to establish a ministry. But he failed. He had had an affair with a woman, and he had lost his testimony. He was through. "It is impossible to renew them again unto repentance." I don't question his salvation; he is a gifted man who could be

mightily used by God but is not. "Seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." My friend, any time you as a born again child of God live like one of the Devil's children, you are crucifying the Son of God -- because He came to give you a perfect redemption and to enable you by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to be filled with the Spirit and live for Him.

"For the land which hath drunk the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them for whose sake it is also tilled, receiveth blessing from God" ([v. 7](#), ASV). The garden produce is a blessing to man -- my, it is delicious! "But if it beareth thorns and thistles, it is rejected and nigh unto a curse; whose end is to be burned" ([v. 8](#), ASV). "Rejected" is *adokimos*, the same word Paul used when writing to the Corinthian believers, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" ([1Cor. 9:27](#)). "Castaway" is the same word *adokimos*, meaning "not approved." In effect, Paul is saying, "When I come into His presence I don't want to be disapproved. I don't want the Lord Jesus to say to me, 'You have failed. Your life should have been a testimony but it was not.'" Oh, my friend, you are going to hear that if you are not living for Him! I know we don't want to hear these things, but we need to face the facts.

Now notice the key to this chapter: "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak" ([v. 9](#)). The writer to the Hebrew believers is saying, "I am persuaded that you are going to live for God, that you are not going to remain babes in Christ but will grow up."

For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love,  
which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered  
to the saints, and do minister [[Heb. 6:10](#)].

"Work and labour of love" won't save you, but if you are saved, this is why you are rewarded. This is where good works come in. Although they have nothing to do with your salvation, they certainly do have a very important part in a believer's life.

And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to  
the full assurance of hope unto the end [[Heb. 6:11](#)].

We need that "full assurance of hope unto the end."

That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith  
and patience inherit the promises [[Heb. 6:12](#)].

God has made a lot of promises to us if we are faithful to Him.

For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear  
by no greater, he swore by himself [[Heb. 6:13](#)].

As you know, when you take an oath, you take it on something greater than you are. Since there is nothing greater than God, He swore by Himself.

Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will  
multiply thee [[Heb. 6:14](#)].

God promised that to Abraham (see [Gen. 22:15-18](#); [Heb. 11:19](#)).

And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise [[Heb. 6:15](#)].

There is something here that is quite wonderful. Abraham patiently endured, and a new assurance came by trusting God. When you trust God, you walk with Him. You grow in grace and in the knowledge of Him through the study of His Word. This brings you to a place of assurance that cannot be gainsaid.

For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife [[Heb. 6:16](#)].

When men confirm a statement with an oath, it is an end of every dispute.

Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath [[Heb. 6:17](#)].

When God does a thing like this, He doesn't need to take an oath, but He does take one to make it very clear how all-important it is.

That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us [[Heb. 6:18](#)].

"That by two immutable things" -- what are the two immutable (or unchangeable) things? The Lord promised Abram descendants as innumerable as the stars of heaven (see [Gen. 15:4-5](#)), then later He confirmed His promise with an oath (see [Gen. 22:16-18](#)). God confirmed His unchangeable Word of promise by a second unchangeable thing, His oath. These two immutable things gave Abraham encouragement and assurance.

Now what are the two immutable things for us today? Not only do we have the promise made to Abraham for our encouragement, but we have a far richer revelation of God's love -- the gift of His Son. The (1) death and resurrection of Christ and (2) His ascension and intercession for us are the two immutable things.

These four great facts give us an assurance and provide a refuge that we can lay hold upon.

"Who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." This reminds us of the cities of refuge which God provided for the children of Israel (see [Num. 35](#); [Deut. 19](#); [Josh. 20](#) -- [Josh. 21](#)). Those cities of refuge serve as types of Christ sheltering the sinner from death. It was a very marvelous provision for a man who accidentally killed someone. Maybe the one whom he killed had a hot-headed brother who wanted vengeance. So the fugitive could escape to a city of refuge where he would be protected and his case tried. If he was acquitted of intentional killing, he must remain within the city until the death of the high priest.

What a picture this is for us today! This reveals that Christ is our refuge. My friend, I have already been carried into court, and at the trial I was found guilty. I was a sinner. The penalty which was leveled against me was death -- and it has already been executed. Christ bore the penalty for me, you see. Because He died in my place, I am free. I have been delivered from the penalty of sin; never do I have to answer for it again. I am free

now to go out and serve Him. I now have a High Priest, a resurrected Savior, to whom I can go. What a wonderful picture of my Savior this gives! The apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" ([1Cor. 10:11](#)). "Ensamples" are types, and Melchizedek is a type of Christ. Millions of things could have been recorded, but God chose to record only these things because they enable us to grow in our understanding of Him and our relationship to Him.

Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and  
stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;

Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high  
priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec [[Heb. 6:19-20](#)].

When Christ ascended back to heaven, He assumed the office of High Priest.

"Entereth into that within the veil." Christ as High Priest entered into the temple in heaven (after which the earthly tabernacle was patterned, [Hebrews 8:5](#)). He passed through the veil into the Holy of Holies, into the presence of God, and presented His blood there. Then He "sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."

Now one difference between Aaron and the Lord Jesus is (and I say this reverently) that poor old Aaron never did sit down. There were no seats in the tabernacle -- there was the mercy seat, but that typified God's throne. Aaron only hurried in and hurried out. But you and I have a superior High Priest. He has gone in. He has sat down. He has a finished redemption.

Jesus Christ is the "forerunner," which implies that others are to follow.

"As an anchor of the soul." We have an even stronger encouragement than Abraham had in his time because our High Priest has entered in advance into the presence of God for us, and He is there today interceding for us.

## Chapter 7

**THEME:** Christ our High Priest after the order of Melchizedek

The rest of the Epistle to the Hebrews deals with the subject of the living Christ who is at this moment at God's right hand. It is a subject that is really neglected in the church today. We talk a great deal about the death and resurrection of Christ -- and that is wonderful -- but my friend, we need to go on to a living Christ who is at God's right hand and who has a ministry there for us. Now the reality of that ministry to us is what is going to test our spiritual life. Here is a barometer or Geiger counter which you can put down on your life: How is the truth of this chapter of Hebrews going to affect your spiritual life?

The writer to the Hebrews is going to make a comparison and contrast of the priesthood of Melchizedek and the priesthood of Aaron.

### **Christ Is Perpetual Priest (7:1-3)**

For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him [[Heb. 7:1](#)].

The little word for is used by the writer to the Hebrews as cement to hold together what has been said previously and what he is now going to say. It refers us back to [verse 20](#) of chapter 6. Melchizedek is a type of Christ. In the historical record Melchizedek is called "king of Salem" and "priest of the most high God" (see [Gen. 14:17-24](#)). Not much is said about Melchizedek in [Genesis 14](#) -- frankly, I would have forgotten about him, but the Spirit of God didn't forget about him. When we come to [Psalm 110](#) there is this prophecy concerning the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ: ". . . Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" ([Ps. 110:4](#)).

You and I are living in the day of Christ's priesthood. There are many critics today who do not like the term dispensations. Many preachers won't mention the word. I mention it because the Bible uses the term. Dispensations are the different ages or time-periods showing the progressive order of God's dealing with the human family. This is an example: Back in the Old Testament Aaron was the high priest, and there was a literal tabernacle down here. Today we have a High Priest, but He is not ministering in any building down here. He is up yonder at God's right hand, and He is there right now.

While there are not many references to Melchizedek in the Old Testament, there are quite a few references to him right here in the Epistle to the Hebrews. In [Hebrews 5:10](#) we read, "Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec." Then again in [Hebrews 6:20](#), "Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." Now here in verse 1 the writer says, "For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him." He is going to talk a great deal about Melchizedek in this chapter. The very key to this chapter is found in [verse 17](#): "For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."

Since we are going to look at Christ as a priest after the order of Melchizedek, we need to know all we can about Melchizedek, and we need to go back to the account in [Genesis 14](#). The events of [Genesis 14](#) took place after Sodom, and we have in this chapter the first account of a war. The kings of the east formed a confederacy and came against the kings of the west, that is, those who lived around the Dead Sea. The kings of the east won and lugged off the people as slaves and the wealth of the cities as booty.

Word was brought to Abraham that Lot was being carried away into captivity. Abraham immediately armed about 318 men out of his own household, which means he had quite a household. Each man that he could arm must have had at least one woman and a child. Therefore Abraham must have had about a thousand people who served under him! He took these 318 men, and by a surprise attack he was able to get a victory over the kings of the east. All he was concerned about was rescuing Lot, but in so doing he was able to rescue the king of Sodom and all the others.

In [Genesis 14:17](#) we are told: "And the king of Sodom went out to meet him after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that were with him at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale." The king of Sodom made Abraham an offer



which he refused, then out of nowhere we read: "And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God" ([Gen. 14:18](#)).

To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace [[Heb. 7:2](#)].

It has been supposed by some that Salem was Jerusalem. I do not think that is true at all. Salem is not a place -- the word salem means "peace." He does not say that Melchizedek was king of Jerusalem. He was king of peace; he was a man who could make peace in that day. I am sure he was king of a literal city somewhere, but it doesn't mean he was king of Jerusalem -- it could have been any place. He was king of peace.

Melchizedek was also the "King of righteousness." That is what the name Melchizedek means: melek is a Hebrew word meaning "king," and tsedeq means "righteousness." Jeremiah speaks of Jehovah-tsidkenu, meaning "Jehovah our righteousness."

Melchizedek is a type of Christ -- he represents Him in several different ways. He is king of peace and king of righteousness. The Lord Jesus Christ is a King. He is righteousness - - He was made unto us righteousness.

Melchizedek was "priest of the most high God." The Lord Jesus is our Great High Priest.

Now the very interesting thing is that when Melchizedek came out to meet Abraham, he brought bread and wine. I believe that these two Old Testament worthies, these patriarchs, celebrated the Lord's Supper together! They were looking forward to the coming of Christ two thousand years before He came. Today you and I meet and partake of bread and wine, looking back to the coming of Christ two thousand years ago. They celebrated the Lord's Supper together. Don't ask me to explain it -- I can't explain it; I can just call your attention to it. This is something before which we stand in profound awe and wonder and worship. This is where faith treads on the high places.

Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually [[Heb. 7:3](#)].

Here Melchizedek is a picture of Christ and a type of Christ in another way. The Lord Jesus comes out of eternity, and He moves into eternity. He has no beginning and no end. He is the beginning. He is the end. You can't go beyond Him in the past, and you can't get ahead of Him in the future. He encompasses all of time and all of eternity. Now how can you find a man who pictures that? Melchizedek is in the Book of Genesis, a book that gives pedigrees -- it tells us that Adam begat so-and-so, and so-and-so begat so-and-so, Abraham begat Isaac, Isaac begat Jacob and Esau, and you follow the genealogies on down -- it is a book of families. Yet in this book that gives the genealogies, Melchizedek just walks out onto the pages of Scripture, out of nowhere, then he walks off the pages of Scripture, and we do not see him anymore, Why did God leave out the genealogy of Melchizedek? Because Melchizedek was to be a type of the Lord Jesus in His priesthood. From the prophecy given in [Psalm 110](#) we see that Melchizedek is a picture of Christ in that the Lord Jesus is the eternal God, and He is a priest because He is the Son of God,

and He is a priest continually. That is, He just keeps on being a priest -- there will be no change in His priesthood because He is eternal.

In the Genesis account we see that Melchizedek came to Abraham at just the right moment. Abraham was about to be tested, and he needed someone to encourage him and to strengthen him. Melchizedek came with bread and wine, and he was the priest of "the most high God." (This is the first time in Scripture that God is called "the most high God.") He came just as the king of Sodom was making a proposition to Abraham: "Now Abraham, it was nice of you to recover Lot and the rest of the people, and we appreciate that. I know you don't want to make the people slaves; so give us the people, and you keep the booty. You keep it, Abraham, it's yours." Now according to the Code of Hammurabi for that day, the booty did belong to Abraham, but Abraham said, "Why, I wouldn't do that at all. I won't take even a shoestring from you -- not even a thread. I refuse to receive anything from you" (see [Gen. 14:23](#)).

Then God appeared to Abraham and said, "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward" ([Gen. 15:1](#)).

Melchizedek came and ministered to Abraham. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Great High Priest, and He ministers to us today. I will be very frank with you, if He doesn't minister to you and bless your heart and life, it is because you are still a little babe and you haven't grown up. You have not entered into the great truth presented here. My Christian friend, have you gone through trials and deep waters, and has Jesus ministered to you and helped you? Are you conscious of the fact that He blesses you every day?

On one tour that I conducted to Bible lands, I left half-sick and would not have gone if my wife had not urged me to do so. I just didn't feel up to the trip. On the trip I was sick several times and had to drop out of the tour a couple of days. But God was so good to us. We had good weather; we never had a bad flight, and the Lord was just good to me in so many ways. I was conscious of the fact that my High Priest was on the job; He was doing His job, my friend, and He was blessing. I'm talking to you about reality. I'm not talking to you about a theory, about a religion, or about a ritual that you go through. I'm talking to you about a Man in the glory who is alive, and He is the living God. Is He the living God to you?

Notice what it says in [Genesis 14:19](#) -- "And he [Melchizedek] blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth." You and I live in a universe that belongs to Him; He owns it, and He has said that all things are ours today. Do you enjoy a sunrise? Just this morning I went by myself out to a nearby golf course, and I saw the sun come up over the Sierra Madre mountains. He did that just for me this morning. What a performance He put on. He is wonderful! What a glorious day it is! He is the living Christ. I just thanked Him again for bringing me to another day, and I thanked Him for being so good to me, and I told Him that I love Him. The living Christ is yonder at God's right hand. How real is He to you?

### **Christ Is Perfect Priest (7:4-22)**

Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils [[Heb. 7:4](#)].

Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek. He recognized that Melchizedek was above him and that he was the priest of the most high God.

And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham [[Heb. 7:5](#)].

In Abraham the sons of Levi, who were descended from Abraham, paid tithes to Melchizedek. This shows that Melchizedek was superior to Aaron and his family.

My friend, one of the ways in which you recognize the lordship of Jesus Christ is by coming and making a gift to Him. Every gift ought to be more than just to a church or to some other ministry; it should be a gift to the Lord Jesus Christ. You recognize His lordship, and you are a priest worshiping when you bring a gift to Him.

But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises [[Heb. 7:6](#)].

You would think that Abraham would be superior to Melchizedek, but he was not. Melchizedek was a Gentile who was the priest of the most high God. I do not know where he got his information about God, nor do I know the background of this man. If anyone tries to tell you more about him, he is guessing. Also there are a whole lot of things I can't explain about the Lord Jesus because He is God. I do know that He is my Great High Priest today -- and that's all I need to know.

And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better [[Heb. 7:7](#)].

Abraham was blessed by Melchizedek who was better than he was. When you and I worship the Lord Jesus and bow before Him, we recognize His superiority.

And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth [[Heb. 7:8](#)].

"Here men that die" refers to the Levitical priests; "but there he" refers to Melchizedek.

You can offer yourself to Him, and He will receive you. When I offer myself to Him, He doesn't get much, but I have offered myself to Him and am thankful that he will accept me.

And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham.

For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him [[Heb. 7:9-10](#)].

"Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham." The priestly tribe of Levi was in the loins of Abraham when he paid tithes to Melchizedek, and thus Levi also paid tithes to Melchizedek. In the same way, back yonder when Adam sinned, I also sinned. In Adam all died. The reason you and I are going to die, if the Lord tarries His coming, is that we are in Adam and we sinned in Adam. However, today I am perfect because I am in Christ. Do you realize that? God sees me in Christ, and I am perfect in Him. I am

accepted in the Beloved. My friend, this is great scriptural truth, and it is stated in simple language.

If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? [[Heb. 7:11](#)].

In other words, the thing which characterized the Aaronic priesthood is that it was incomplete. It never brought perfection, complete communion with God. It never gave redemption and acceptance before God to the people. It never achieved its goal. Therefore we need Christ.

For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law [[Heb. 7:12](#)].

We are not under the Mosaic Law. The Mosaic Law belonged to the Aaronic priesthood where they offered bloody sacrifices. The Mosaic Law and the Aaronic priesthood go together.

For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar.

For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood [[Heb. 7:13-14](#)].

The Lord Jesus came in the tribe of Judah and therefore could never be a priest here on earth. The priestly tribe was the tribe of Levi. The priesthood had to be changed since Christ did not come from Levi.

And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest [[Heb. 7:15](#)].

This is what the prophecy in [Psalm 110](#) said concerning the Messiah who was to come.

Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.

For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec [[Heb. 7:16-17](#)].

Christ became a priest by His resurrection from the dead; He has an endless life.

For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof [[Heb. 7:18](#)].

The Mosaic system went out of style -- it wore out. It never gave what man must have: perfection.

For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God [[Heb. 7:19](#)].

We come to God through Christ. We have seen that the Lord Jesus Christ is a perpetual priest and He is a perfect priest. The Aaronic priesthood could not fill the bill. Now we have a perfect priest, and that one is the Lord Jesus Christ. He has provided salvation for

you and me. God has taken us out of Adam and put us in Christ. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" ([2Cor. 5:17](#)). We are no longer joined to Adam but are now joined to the living Christ.

We will summarize the contrast between the priesthood of Aaron and the priesthood of Melchizedek as follows:

Law vs. Power (law restrains -- power enables) Commandment  
(external) vs. Life (internal) Carnal (flesh) vs. Endless (eternal life)  
Changing vs. Unchanging Weakness and unprofitableness vs. Nigh to  
God Nothing perfect vs. Better hope

And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest:

(For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:) [[Heb. 7:20-21](#)].

In [Psalm 110](#) is a prophecy of the fact that the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, would be in the line of Melchizedek as priest. "The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" ([Ps. 110:4](#)). One thing that makes the priesthood of Christ superior is the very simple fact that it rests not only upon the Word of God but upon the oath of God. All the Old Testament tells us of the tribe of Levi is that they were set aside for that particular function -- no oath was given concerning them.

By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament [[Heb. 7:22](#)].

The word testament should be "covenant." We have not only a better priesthood in Jesus Christ, but it is also by a better covenant. Christ is our High Priest. He ministers in a superior sanctuary, by a better covenant, and built upon better promises -- we will see this subject expanded in chapters 8 through 10. The Lord Jesus' priesthood is superior in every department.

### **Christ In His Person Is Perpetual And Perfect Priest (7:23-28)**

And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death [[Heb. 7:23](#)].

In other words, the Aaronic priesthood of the Old Testament always ended by death. Aaron died, just as Moses did. I have always felt that the death of Aaron -- if it wasn't greater -- was just as great a loss to Israel as the death of Moses. In his death they lost their high priest, the one who had gone with them through the wilderness, the one who knew them and understood them. Now they would have to have a new priest. You and I don't have a changing priesthood -- Christ will always live to make intercession for us.

But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood [[Heb. 7:24](#)].

The Lord Jesus won't be dying anymore. He died once for our sins, but never again will He die. He is there all the time for you.

I received a letter once from a man in Puerto Rico who comes home late at night from his work in an oil refinery. He listens every night [Acts 11:30](#) to our radio Bible study program. The Spirit of God ministers the Word of God to him down there late at night. The Lord Jesus knew all about that man long before I got his letter and learned of him. I didn't know him, and I didn't know he was listening to the radio broadcast. The Lord Jesus knew all about him because He has an unchangeable priesthood. He is on duty twenty-four hours a day. That means that [Acts 11:30](#) at night He knows this man, understands him, and ministers the Word of God to him. I rejoice in being able to give out the Word of God today because I am assured that the Spirit of God will be ministering it to folk. The Lord Jesus is the Great High Priest. While that fellow was listening, I was asleep in bed on the other side of the continent. But while I am sleeping there is a High Priest up yonder who will make the Word effective. How wonderful this is! Let's give Him all the praise and glory.

The following verse is perhaps the key verse to this entire section, and it is the very heart of the gospel.

Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them [[Heb. 7:25](#)].

"Wherefore" -- again we have this little hinge on which a big door swings. It swings back into what has been said before and swings on into what is ahead.

"He ever liveth." It says, first of all, that Christ is not dead, but He is living. Right at this very moment He is alive. We emphasize the death and resurrection of Christ, but we ought to go beyond that. We have to do with a living Christ. We know Him no longer after the flesh. We know Him today as our Great High Priest at God's right hand. My friend, that is where we need to put the emphasis. He died down here to save us, but He lives up there to keep us saved.

"He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him." He is able to keep on saving you. "To the uttermost" means all the way through. He is able to save us completely and perfectly. He is the Great Shepherd who up to this very moment has never lost a sheep. Do you want to know something? He never will lose one. If you are one of His sheep, you may feel like you are going to be lost, but He is up there for you and He is watching over you.

"He ever liveth to make intercession." Intercession actually means "intervention." He intervenes for us. ". . . We shall be saved by his life" ([Rom. 5:10](#)). John wrote, "My little children [born ones], these things write I unto you, that ye sin not." Well, John, you are not talking to me because I do lots of things that are wrong. Now, John, do you have a word for me? John went on to say, "And if any man sin" -- now we are getting somewhere! -- "we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" ([1John 2:1](#)). An advocate is a paraclete, a comforter, someone to stand at our side. He is Jesus Christ the righteous. Everything He does is right. Everything He does is righteous. We shall be saved by His life.



How wonderful to know we have a living Christ! You are not alone, my friend. It is just baby stuff to sit down and cry, "Oh, I'm having this problem, and I'm so alone. There's nobody to help me. To whom shall I go?" My friend, what do you think He is doing up there? Aren't you conscious of Him? Why don't you turn to Him?

I remember talking to the mother of a man who was leaving his wife and running away with another woman. I took the mother with me when I went to talk with the other woman. She would not change her mind and was determined to go with this man. This poor mother, as I took her home, just got down on the floor of the car and began to cry out, "Oh, God, why have You forsaken me?" But by the time I got her home, she was more composed and apologized, "I'm sorry I said that God has forsaken me. I don't believe that He has." I assured her that we can be sure of the fact that He ever lives to make intercession for us. Though we are faithless, He is always faithful to us. It is wonderful to know He is up there, my friend.

For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens [[Heb. 7:26](#)].

He "became us" means Christ is just what we need. He is the one who fills the bill. He is just right for us -- we couldn't have anyone better than He is.

"Holy" -- that is, in relationship to God. He is the holy one.

"Harmless" means tht He is free from any malice, craftiness, or cleverness. When He gets you off when you sin, it is not because He is a clever lawyer. It is because He is the one who paid the penalty for you, and the penalty absolutely has been paid.

"Undefiled" -- He is free from any moral impurity. My friend, this is God's answer to the blasphemous films, songs, and literature of our day. The Bible makes it clear that the Lord Jesus was free from moral impurity.

He is also "separate from sinners." He is like us, yet unlike us. He could mix and mingle with sinners, and they didn't feel uncomfortable in His presence, but He was not one of them. His enemies accused Him of associating with publicans and sinners. He sure did, yet He wasn't one of them. He was separate from sinners.

Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself [[Heb. 7:27](#)].

Notice that the Lord Jesus did not need to offer any sacrifice for His own sin -- He had none.

If it were necessary for the Lord Jesus to come back and die for you again, He'd be back, my friend. He would be back today. But He won't be back to die for you -- He died once.

The continual sacrificing in the Old Testament must have gotten pretty old and pretty tiresome. I am sure that many times when the priests would meet there at the laver to wash their hands and feet, one of them would turn to the other and say, "How many times have you been here today?"

"Well, I don't know. I'm sure I have been here at least a dozen times."

The other would reply, "Well, I have been here fifteen times. I've washed my hands here so many times that I've got dishpan hands! And look at my feet -- they look like I've been standing in water all day. I'm so tired of going to that altar and offering sacrifices again and again and again."

I want to tell you, it must have been pretty wearisome, and if Aaron had overheard them talking, I think he would have said, "I agree with you that this ritual gets tiresome, but do you know what God is trying to tell us? He is trying to tell us that sin is an awful thing and that it requires the shedding of blood. But He has One who is coming someday who is going to die on a cross for us. When He does, there is going to be no more shedding of blood. He will have paid the penalty."

For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore [[Heb. 7:28](#)].

The high priest in the Old Testament had to offer a sacrifice for himself -- the Lord Jesus never did.

We have a High Priest who can be touched, who can be reached today. He is there to help and He understands, but He is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.

## Chapter 8

**THEME:** The true tabernacle; the New Covenant is better than the old

The high watermark of this magnificent epistle is before us in this chapter -- actually it began in the previous chapter at [verse 25](#): "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." This verse is the key to this section. You see, the emphasis is upon the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ is living. He is not dead -- He is not on a cross; He is not lying in a grave. He arose from the dead, and the emphasis is upon our living Christ. Then [verse 26](#): "For such an high priest became us [He is what we need], who is holy [in His relation to God], harmless [He never does anything to harm -- He is never moved by anger], undefiled [free from any moral impurity], separate from sinners [in His life and character, although He is right down here among us and wants us to come to Him], and made higher than the heavens [He is in the presence of God]." The value of His sacrifice is stated in [verse 27](#): "Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself." His sacrifice was not of silver or gold or bulls or goats; He offered up Himself! There is nothing of greater value than He. [Verse 28](#): "For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore." You do not place your confidence in a mere man when you place your confidence in Jesus; you place your confidence in the Godman. Because He is a man, He can sympathize with you and is able to meet your need. He is a royal priest. He is a righteous priest. He is a peace-promoting priest. He is a personal priest -- He is for

you personally. He didn't inherit the office; that is, He didn't come in the line of Aaron. He is an eternal priest.

Now here in chapter 8 we are told that He ministers in a superior sanctuary by a much better covenant, which is built upon better promises.

### **The True Tabernacle (8:1-5)**

Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens [[Heb. 8:1](#)].

"This is the sum." He is not actually summing this up, although that thought is included. He is doing more than that. Let me give you a literal translation: "In consideration of the things which are spoken, this is the focal (chief) point. We have such an high priest, who sat down in the heavens on the right hand of the Majesty." As we have said, this is the high watermark of Hebrews.

"Who is set on the right hand of the throne." Christ did something which no priest in the Old Testament ever did. There is not a priest in the line of Aaron who ever had a chair in the tabernacle where he sat down. He was on the run all the time. Why? Because he had work to do. All of these things are shadows that point to a finished sacrifice. Now that Christ has died, all has been fulfilled, and we do not need to wonder if we are doing enough to merit salvation. All we need to do is turn to Jesus Christ and trust Him as our Savior. He sat down because He had finished our redemption. He asks only that we accept it.

A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man [[Heb. 8:2](#)].

Bezaleel was the master craftsman who made the beautiful articles of furniture for the tabernacle. The mercy seat and the golden lampstand were of gold and highly ornate. It was all man-made, although the Holy Spirit directed him. In contrast, the Lord Jesus ministers in a tabernacle that He Himself has made in heaven.

Now we are going to see something that I feel totally inadequate to present.

For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.

For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law [[Heb. 8:3-4](#)].

This verse makes it clear that at the time the Epistle to the Hebrews was written the temple in Jerusalem was still in existence and that in it priests were still going about their duties.

Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount [[Heb. 8:5](#)].

It is my belief that when God instructed Moses to build the tabernacle in the wilderness, God gave him a pattern of the original in heaven, the true tabernacle ([v. 2](#)), meaning genuine.

The tabernacle in its beautiful simplicity furnishes a type of Jesus Christ (which is almost lost in the complicated detail of the temple). The tabernacle was called a tent, the sides of which were upright boards, covered on both sides with gold. It measured thirty cubits long and ten cubits wide and was divided into two compartments. The first compartment was called the Holy Place. In it were three articles of furniture: the golden lampstand; the golden table of showbread; and the golden altar where incense was offered -- no sacrifice other than incense. The lampstand was a type of Christ, the Light of the World. The table of showbread symbolized Him as the Bread of Life. The golden altar at which the high priest offered prayer, spoke of Christ, our Great Intercessor. Then on the great Day of Atonement the high priest passed through the separating veil to the inner compartment, the Holy of Holies, in which were two articles of furniture. (1) The ark of the covenant was a box made of wood, covered with gold inside and outside, in which were the Ten Commandments written on tables of stone, a pot of manna, and Aaron's rod that budded. The Ten Commandments speak of the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ came to fulfill the Law, and He is the only one who ever kept it in all of its detail. Then the pot of manna speaks of the fact that He is the Bread of Life even today. Aaron's rod that budded speaks of Christ's resurrection. (2) The ark of the covenant was covered with a highly ornamented top called the mercy seat. Crowning it were two cherubim of beaten gold. Once a year the high priest placed blood on the mercy seat, and that is what made it a mercy seat. That was God's dwelling place; that is, the place where God met with the children of Israel.

Around the tabernacle was a court, surrounded by a linen fence one hundred cubits long and fifty cubits wide. In that outer court were two articles of furniture. The first was the brazen altar where all sacrifices were made. The sin question was settled there, but since saints still sin, there was also a laver where the priests could wash, signifying the cleansing from sin.

Now, the Holy Place is where the priests served and where they worshiped. We worship God when we pray, feed upon His Word, and walk in the light of His presence, that is, in obedience to Him.

No one but the high priest (and he only once a year) entered into the next compartment, the Holy of Holies. But when the Lord Jesus died, the separating veil was rent in twain -- torn in two -- signifying that He had forever opened the way into the Holy of Holies and the presence of God. We might say that the Lord Jesus Christ took the tabernacle, which was horizontal, and made it perpendicular to the earth so that the Holy of Holies is now in heaven -- because that is where He is. And we are going to find in the following chapter that the golden altar of incense, together with the ark of the covenant, are now in heaven. They are there because Christ Himself is there.

If you had been in the wilderness with Israel, you would have seen the tabernacle in the heart of the encampment, with the tents of the tribes camped all around it. You would have seen the pillar of cloud over the tabernacle by day and the pillar of fire by night.

You would have seen the priests busily running to and fro carrying on their ministry of offering sacrifices and observing all of the ritual which God had commanded.

Now all of that was a shadow of a reality. The reality itself was in heaven. And today Jesus is there in the heavenly tabernacle functioning in behalf of you and me.

Now perhaps you are saying, "You said that when we got to this section that the writer of this epistle would start serving porterhouse steaks. Well, it seems that we are still drinking milk, because what we have been studying so far seems very simple. When are we going to get something deep?" Well, the beefsteak is ready now, and I'd like to put it right down before you.

I'll put it in the form of a personal question. My friend, is Christ real to you right now? If you still like to run around in a ritual and have a nice beautiful church service (there is nothing wrong with that -- don't misunderstand me), but if you think that is worship, and if you think that you are serving God by just teaching a Sunday school class or singing in the choir, I have news for you. He is trying to tell us, friend, that Jesus is up yonder in heaven for you right at this very moment. What does that really mean to you? Come now, don't choke on this steak. Don't ask for a glass of milk. Don't start running around doing little things. Let the pots and pans alone, Martha; you don't need to be handling them right now. Let's sit at Jesus' feet. Let Him be a reality in our lives. When you left the house this morning, did you take Him with you? Were you conscious of His presence? He is in heaven serving you, friend! Christ is your intercessor. You are to go to Him to make confession of your sin. Why is it that you are worrying your pastor to death with your problems? Why do you keep going to him for counseling? Isn't Jesus real to you today? Quit being a little baby that has to be burped all the time. Grow up! Come into the presence of the living Savior. That is what the writer is talking about. Oh, may God take the veil from our eyes, and may He make Jesus Christ -- in all of His power, and in all of His salvation, and in all of His love, and in all of His care for you -- a true reality!

I have been asked, "Why don't you run up the American flag? Why don't you fight corruption and lawlessness?" The reason I don't preach about those things is because I teach the Word of God, and I am trying to get folk into the presence of the living Christ. When that is accomplished, all of those other things will drop into their right places. If you walk in the light of His presence, you are going to walk with Him down the street. If you go into a barroom, Christ is going to have to go in with you. I don't know whether you would want to take Him into a bar or not. When Christ is with you, there are many things you are going to have to stop and consider. You will watch your conduct when you are conscious of the presence of Jesus Christ with you all of the time. He is the living intercessor today. He is alive.

Again let me say that the Lord Jesus ministers in a better tabernacle, the genuine tabernacle in heaven. He has made the throne of God a throne of grace, and we have been bidden to come there with great confidence and assurance that He is there. The thing you and I need to pray above everything else is: "Lord, I believe. Help Thou mine unbelief." I don't know about you, but my unbelief is bigger than my belief. We need to come to Him by faith. "Without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" ([Heb. 11:6](#)).

So you and I need to have the reality of Jesus Christ in our lives. You will not see Him with your physical eye nor hear Him with your physical ear, but you will behold Him with that inner eye and hear Him with that inner ear which only faith can open.

Oh, how wonderful this is! Perhaps you think we have bogged down in this section. No, we are in His presence. We are at the high watermark. We are walking in the tall corn now. This is a wonderful section of God's Word.

### **The New Covenant Is Better Than The Old (8:6-13)**

But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises [[Heb. 8:6](#)].

"He obtained a more excellent ministry." The tabernacle down here was a shadow of the real tabernacle up yonder in heaven. Christ lives up there and He can keep us saved. Somebody asks me, "Do you think you can lose your salvation?" Well, I'll make a confession to you. I would lose my salvation before the sun goes down if Christ were not up there right now. He is having a problem with me -- and maybe He is having a problem with you -- but, thank God, He is there. My, how we need Him!

"He is the mediator of a better covenant." We have what is known as a New Covenant today; we call it a new testament. The New Testament is actually a New Covenant which God has made, and it is in contrast to the old covenant of the Old Testament. God gave to Moses the Law, then He gave to him instructions for the tabernacle with its service. It was there that sin was dealt with. No one was ever saved by keeping the Law. No one ever came to God and said, "I have kept all Your commandments, therefore receive me." No, instead they were continually bringing sacrifices because they had transgressed God's law. The Law revealed to them that they had come short of the glory of God. The sacrificial system was all shadow. Although the tabernacle God gave to them was a literal tabernacle, it was a shadow of the real tabernacle in which Christ ministers today. In other words, so far we have seen that we have a better priest; we have a better sacrifice; we have a better tabernacle. All of this converges yonder at the brazen altar because Christ is all three: He is the better priest who ministers there. He is the better sacrifice -- He offered Himself. And He ministers in a better tabernacle, for He offered His own blood for your sin and my sin.

At this point I would like to refer you to my book, *The Tabernacle, God's Portrait of Christ*. In it I go into much more detail, and I take the position that Christ offered His literal blood in heaven. It is my opinion that He was on His way to do this when He appeared to Mary. "Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God" ([John 20:17](#)). I think He was at that moment our High Priest on His way to offer His literal blood in heaven. And I believe it will be there throughout eternity to remind us of the price that He paid for our redemption. When my book was first published, it was reviewed by a Christian magazine. The critic recommended it but warned that I took this literal view. The critic called it a crude concept. Well, I don't think that the blood of Christ is crude -- either when it was shed on earth or offered in heaven. Simon Peter, who was not what one might call a cultured



individual, called it precious blood. A society dowager approached a great preacher in the East years ago. Looking at him through her lorgnette (a lorgnette, you know, is a sneer on the end of a stick), she said, "I hope you will not be like our last preacher. He was rather old-fashioned and put great emphasis on the blood. The blood offends my aesthetic nature. Don't you think it is crude?" His reply to her was, "Madam, I see nothing crude about the blood of Christ except my sin and your sin." I agree with him wholeheartedly. I say to you very definitely and dogmatically that I believe His blood is even now in heaven, and throughout the endless ages it will be there to remind us of the awful price Christ paid to redeem us.

"Which was established upon better promises." Back in the Old Testament God had given the Mosaic Law, and when the people of Israel broke it, they brought the sacrifices. Before God gave the Mosaic Law and the instructions for approaching Him through the tabernacle ritual, they came to God by faith like Abraham did. Then when we move back of the time of Abraham, we find that Noah was on a different basis altogether. I don't feel that you can read the Bible intelligently without seeing that God dealt with men differently in different ages. If you don't want to call them dispensations, then you use your own word, but if you accept the inerrancy of Scripture and believe it is the Word of God, you are faced with the dispensational system -- if you read it aright.

The writer of this epistle says that now we have a "better covenant" and that it is based upon "better promises." Although you and I as Christians have been made a part of it, God is not through with the nation Israel, and these "better promises" are going to be fulfilled for them in the future Millennium.

When you read the Old Testament prophets, you just cannot get away from the fact that God is going to return the children of Israel to their land. (As far as I can see, the present return of the Jews to Israel is not the fulfillment of prophecy.) For example, notice this prophecy in Jeremiah: "Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tents, and have mercy on his dwellingplaces; and the city shall be builded upon her own heap, and the palace shall remain after the manner thereof" ([Jer. 30:18](#)). Then in [Jeremiah 31:8](#) we read, "Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither." This verse mentions the north country, which is Russia. The Jews are having a hard time getting out of Russia today, but when God steps in, there will be no trouble getting out of Russia and going to Palestine. Continuing on in the Book of Jeremiah we are told, "Hear the word of the LORD, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock. For the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he" ([Jer. 31:10-11](#), italics mine). The Jews are not in Israel under God's redemption today -- they are far from Him. But when that day comes, there will be a fulfillment of what the writer to the Hebrews is talking about when he says that there are going to be better promises on a better covenant that God will make with these people. "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this

shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people" ([Jer. 31:31-33](#), italics mine). In effect, God says, "I gave it to them before and wrote it on a cold hard stone -- and they couldn't keep it, but now I am going to write it on the fleshly tablets of the heart." He has not done this up to the present moment. As I write this, I have just returned from the land of Israel and I saw no turning to God at all. One of the tour guides whom I had the privilege of meeting was a very attractive and likeable fellow. After I had witnessed to him, I told him, "You ought to be telling me about Jesus. You are a Jew, and you are living here in this land where He lived. He died for the sins of the world. I'm a poor Gentile who has come from afar. You ought to be telling me about Him -- and here I am telling you!" He just laughed. May I say to you, friend, the Jews are not back in their land according to this promise. But someday Jeremiah's prophecy is going to be fulfilled. Listen to him: "And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me [they don't know Him today], from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" ([Jer. 31:34](#)). This is what the writer to the Hebrews is talking about. The New Covenant is established upon better promises. Christ is the mediator of the better covenant because it contains better promises.

For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second [[Heb. 8:7](#)].

"For if that first covenant had been faultless" -- the first covenant was not adequate, which created a necessity for a better covenant. Somebody says, "Then the old covenant was wrong." Now, that is not the case. Listen to the next verse:

For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah [[Heb. 8:8](#)].

"For finding fault with them" -- not with it. The problem never was with God's covenant. There is nothing wrong with God's law, but there is a whole lot wrong with you and me. You and I are not able to keep the Law; we are not able to measure up to its requirements.

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah." We have just read about that in Jeremiah's prophecy, and you can read about it in the rest of the prophets.

Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord [[Heb. 8:9](#)].

The people broke the first covenant. It did not enable them to perform what it demanded.

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people [[Heb. 8:10](#)].

The New Covenant will be written upon their hearts -- not upon tables of stone -- so that they will be able to obey it.

And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more [[Heb. 8:11-12](#)].

There will be full forgiveness of sin. There will be complete pardon.

In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away [[Heb. 8:13](#)].

So, my friend, we are not under the Mosaic system. God says that it is an old model and He has brought in a new model. That New Covenant He has made through the Lord Jesus Christ who is our Savior. Let me repeat, He did it, not because there was something wrong with the old covenant, but because there is something wrong with us. I feel sorry for folk today who have come back to the old covenant. They try to keep the Sabbath day and they try to keep the Mosaic Law. Oh, my friend, if they will really study it and are honest, they know they are not keeping the Mosaic system. They come short. All of us need to come to God for mercy, and accept in His New Covenant the provision of a Savior.

The Law was totally incapable of producing any good thing in man. Paul could say, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing . . ." ([Rom. 7:18](#)). And, friend, that is Scripture, and that is accurate. Man is totally depraved. That doesn't mean only the man across the street or down in the next block from you, nor does it mean only some person who is living in overt sin; it means you and it means me. The Holy Spirit is now able to do the impossible. The Holy Spirit can produce a holy life in weak and sinful flesh.

Let me illustrate this truth by using a very homely incident. Suppose a housewife puts a roast in the oven right after breakfast because she is going to serve it for the noon meal. Time goes by and the telephone rings. It is Mrs. Joe Dokes on the phone. Mrs. Dokes begins with "Have you heard?" Well, the housewife hasn't heard, but she would like to; so she pulls up a chair. Someone has defined a woman as one who draws up a chair when answering a telephone. Mrs. Dokes has a lot to tell, and about an hour goes by. Finally our good housewife says, "Oh, Mrs. Dokes, you'll have to excuse me. I smell the roast -- it's burning!" She hangs up the phone, rushes to the kitchen, and opens the oven. Then she gets a fork and puts it down in the roast to lift it up, but it won't hold. She can't lift it out. She tries again, closer to the bone, but still it won't hold. So she gets a spatula. She puts the spatula under the roast and lifts it out. You see, what the fork could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, the spatula is able to do. Now, there is nothing wrong with the fork -- it was a good fork. But it couldn't hold the flesh because something was wrong with the flesh -- it was overcooked. The spatula does what the fork could not do.

The Law is like the fork in that it was weak through the flesh. It just won't lift us up; it can't lift us up. But a new principle is introduced: the Holy Spirit. What the Law could not do, the Holy Spirit is able to do. Therefore, you and I are to be saved and are to live the Christian life on this new principle. We have a New Covenant based upon better promises; God has given to us the Holy Spirit and Christ, our intercessor, is up yonder to help us today.

This is a very wonderful passage of Scripture. If you want to get off the milk diet (although milk is good for you, and there is milk in the Word), learn to eat some meat along with it. The meat is to put the emphasis upon the living Christ, His ascension, and His intercession yonder in heaven for you and for me. My friend, when we lay hold on the living Christ, we have gone to the heights. We cannot go any higher than that in this age in which we live.

## Chapter 9

**THEME:** New sanctuary better than old; the superior sacrifice

**NEW SANCTUARY BETTER THAN THE OLD** Our subject is the priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ who is a priest after the order of Melchizedek. Presented to us are two ministries which are in sharp contrast. The Levitical service, the ministry of the Aaronic priesthood, was carried out in an earthly tabernacle down here. That sanctuary on earth was merely a type of the one which is in heaven, the sanctuary in which the Lord Jesus is serving today. This sanctuary in heaven provides for better worship. A great many people consider the Law from the standpoint of the Ten Commandments, but the Epistle to the Hebrews approaches the Law from the viewpoint of its place of worship and its priesthood. That approach puts the emphasis on the settling of sins, and, as the writer will point out, the Law never really settled the sin question. "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" ([Heb. 10:4](#)).

Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary [[Heb. 9:1](#)].

The word for "service" here would be better translated as "worship."

"A worldly sanctuary" does not mean worldly as we usually think of it, but it means a sanctuary of this world; that is, it was made of materials of this world. It was made so long, so wide, and so high, and there was a ritual that the people went through in the sanctuary down here. In that sense it was of the world. The writer is going to further contrast it with the sanctuary that is in heaven.

For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary [[Heb. 9:2](#)].

"For there was a tabernacle made" -- notice that we are not taken back to the temple. There is no reference made to Herod's temple for the sake of this illustration. Although the third temple was then in existence, when the type is given, the writer goes beyond them all to that very simple structure that God gave to Moses in the wilderness. "There

was a tabernacle made," and it was made of the things of this world. It was patterned after the one in heaven, but it was much inferior in many different ways, as we shall see.

"Which is called the sanctuary" -- that is, it was the Holy Place. The tabernacle proper was just a big gold box thirty cubits (about forty-five feet) long, ten cubits (about fifteen feet) wide, and ten cubits high. It was divided into two sections. The first was the Holy Place in which there were certain articles of furniture: the table of showbread and the golden lampstand. Then, in the background was the golden altar, the altar of incense, which speaks of prayer -- no sacrifices were ever made there.

And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all;

Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant;

And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot now speak particularly [[Heb. 9:3-5](#)].

In the Holy of Holies (which was separated from the Holy Place by a veil and into which only the high priest entered), there were two articles of furniture. There was the ark, which was just a box made out of gopher wood and overlaid inside and outside with gold, and on top of the ark was a highly ornamented top called the mercy seat. It was fashioned with cherubim, made of pure gold, looking down upon the top of the box. That was where the blood was placed, and that was what made it a mercy seat -- for "without shedding of blood is no remission" of sins.

"Which had the golden censer," that is, the golden altar. Notice that a change has been made -- we are told that the golden altar is inside the Holy of Holies rather than inside the Holy Place. Why has it been moved to the inside? The veil between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies was made of fine twine Egyptian byssus linen with the cherubim woven into it, and it spoke of the humanity of the Lord Jesus. When He died on the cross, He gave His life, His human life, and at that time the veil was rent in twain. So the veil which was torn in two has been removed, signifying that the way to God is wide open, because Christ has made a way. He said, "No man cometh to the Father, but by me" (see [John 14:6](#)). The veil has been rent in twain, and we can come right into God's presence today. But what happened to the golden censer or the golden altar? It has been moved inside the Holy of Holies. Aaron on the great Day of Atonement came with the blood to sprinkle upon the mercy seat, taking a censer filled with coals and with incense in it, and he went inside the Holy of Holies. He was actually transferring, as it were, the altar of incense to the inside. He took the censer of burning coals from off the altar with sweet incense on it, and took it into the Holy of Holies, but he brought it back out again. And he had to do that again the next year and then again the next.

However, we have a Great High Priest who is our Great Intercessor always at the golden altar making intercession for us. His prayers are heard, by the way. Therefore, the golden altar is on the inside, but it is also on the outside, because you and I can come through Him by prayer. That is what Paul meant when he said, "Being justified by faith, we have

peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access . . ." ([Rom. 5:1-2](#)).

The writer mentions also the things which were in the ark. "Wherein was the golden pot that had manna" -- this speaks of the present ministry of Christ. He feeds those who are His own. He feeds them with His Word. He is the Bread of Life. The Bible is God's bakery, and if you want bread, that is where you will go to get it.

"And Aaron's rod that budded." This speaks of the death and resurrection of Christ, because it was a dead rod and life came into it.

"And the tables of the covenant" speaks of the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled all the law.

"Of which we cannot now speak particularly." The writer means he doesn't have time to dwell upon the tabernacle, because the things that he is emphasizing are the priesthood and worship. He is concerned about what real worship is and how we are to worship.

Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went  
always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God  
[\[Heb. 9:6\]](#).

"The priests went always into the first tabernacle." The priests went continually -- they never finished the job. If they went today, they would be going again tomorrow, and the next day, and on and on and on. I am of the opinion that it must have become very monotonous over the years for a priest to continually go through this ritual. The very repetition of it meant that it was not sufficient, that is, that one time would not do. However, we are going to see that Christ went once into the Holy Place -- it was necessary for Him to go just one time.

"Accomplishing the service of God" should be "accomplishing the worship of God." This was the ultimate goal of it all, that God's people might worship Him. This is speaking of real worship, not just a church service where an order of service is followed. When real worship takes place it is a worship that draws us into the presence of Christ where we can adore Him.

The word worship comes from the same Anglo-Saxon root word as worth. To worship is to give someone something of which they are worthy. The Lord Jesus Christ is worthy to receive our praise and our adoration. That is worship, and from that follows service. Real worship will always lead to service. In the midst of His temptation in the wilderness, the Lord Jesus answered Satan, ". . . For it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" ([Matt. 4:10](#), italics mine). You will not have to beg and coax and goad people into doing something, if they are participating in real worship of Christ -- because real worship leads to service. Many ministers spend a great deal of time urging people to do something -- urging them to give, urging them to do visitation, urging them to teach, or urging them to sing. Real worship will lead to service. Such worship is possible only through Jesus Christ.

The ritual of the tabernacle never brought the people into the presence of God. The high priest alone went into the Holy of Holies.



But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people [[Heb. 9:7](#)].

He is speaking now of the great Day of Atonement. This was Yom Kippur, in one sense the high day in the life of the nation Israel. This is the day that the great high priest went into the Holy of Holies on behalf of the nation. And on the basis of his having done this, the nation was accepted for another year.

Our Great High Priest has gone into the Holy of Holies, into the very presence of God. He has gone in, and He has not come out. He is going to be there as long as we are in the world. When He does come out, He is coming out after His own -- we are a part of Him; we are the "body" of Christ.

The purpose of all of this is to make real to your heart and mine the presence of the Lord Jesus. Did you start out the day with Him? This is a hurly-burly world you and I are in, and it has no time for Him. As you have rushed through this day, has He been with you? Have you worshiped Him? To worship Him we do not have to go to church and sing the doxology (although the writer of this epistle is going to urge us to do that, because we need to be with God's people and participate in concerted, corporate worship; it is essential for our growth) but we can worship Him anywhere. You can worship Him at the end of a cotton row or a corn row. You can worship Him on the freeway. You can worship Him in the office. You can worship Him in the classroom. My friend, I don't care where you are, you can worship Him. You and I need to pour out our hearts in adoration and praise unto His holy name.

Now our High Priest has gone into the Holy of Holies on our behalf this very day. And you can see how superior this is to the past when the high priest went in on just one day each year -- and didn't stay; in fact, he hurried out. Tradition tells us that he actually had a chain around his foot, because if he did anything wrong, he would have been struck dead and they would have had to pull him out and get a new high priest.

Oh, the wonder and the glory of it all! Our High Priest has gone into the very presence of God for you and me, and He is there today. Someone has given a little different translation of [Hebrews 9:24](#), and I want to give it to you at this point: "For Christ entered not into a holy place made with hands, like in pattern to the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us." Moses asked to see God's face but was told that no man could see God. However, you and I have a High Priest who has gone into the very presence of God.

We do not worship Him by going through a ritual. We do not worship Him by burning candles or incense, or by having a nice little altar fixed up. Some Protestant churches have really gotten involved in such things.

The last time I was in the church of a minister friend I asked him why he had a cross set up on the table used for the Lord's Supper. He said, "Oh, not only that, but did you notice the candles?" I hadn't noticed them, but he also had a candle at each end of the table. He said, "That's to help the people with their worship." My friend, if you need that kind of help, you are not worshiping Him. The woman at the well asked the Lord Jesus where the

people should worship God, and the Lord replied, "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him" ([John 4:23](#)). I have another minister friend who is very concerned with Jewish evangelism, and he has a menorah with seven candles on it in his church. He told me that it was to keep their minds centered on the fact that they have an obligation to the Jewish people. If we need that sort of thing in our churches, we are not really worshipping God.

Oh, that you and I could get into His presence and smell the sweet incense of His presence -- not with our noses but with our hearts and our souls and our minds. I pray that I might be conscious of the sweetness of His presence, that I might walk in the light of His Word, and that there might be reality in my life every day. I covet that for you too. We need to put away our bottle of milk with its little nipple, and we need to feed on the meat of the Word. We need to get into the presence of the living Christ who is our Great High Priest ministering yonder at a better tabernacle than the one that was on this earth. We can worship the living Christ today.

The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing [[Heb. 9:8](#)].

In other words, all of this was a picture and a type that the way into the very presence of God (actually, right into the very face of God) had not yet been opened.

Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;

Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation [[Heb. 9:9-10](#)].

"That could not make him that did the service perfect," could read "that could not make the worshiper perfect."

The way to God in the tabernacle was actually blocked by the three entrances and compartments. In other words, the people could come only to that outer entrance and bring their sacrifice. If a man brought a little lamb, he would put his hand on it in an act of identification since it would die in his place, and then the priest would take it from there. It would be slain and offered upon the brazen altar. The individual who brought the lamb could go no farther than the entrance. Then, as far as the Holy Place was concerned, only the priest could go in there. And into the Holy of Holies neither the priest nor the people could go. Only the high priest could enter in there. Therefore, the tabernacle was a temporary, makeshift arrangement. The service of ritual and ordinances was given for just a brief time.

Now Christ can bring us to God, but only He can bring us there. ". . . No man cometh unto the Father," He said, "but by me" ([John 14:6](#)). Such is real worship, and real worship will lead to service. Once we get into the presence of God, there will be no problem about serving.

Worship is something that the liberal today condemns. Years ago the late Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick said that the world tried to get rid of Jesus in two ways -- one was by crucifying Him and the other was by worshiping Him! My friend, it is blasphemy to say that if you worship Him you are no better than those who crucified Him! We approach a holy God today on the basis of a crucified Savior. He alone can cause us to worship.

That is the reason for Paul's writing to the Ephesians: "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit." Now notice the first thing Paul speaks of after being filled with the Spirit: "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing, and making melody in your heart to the Lord" ([Eph. 5:18-19](#)). That is worship. My friend, the greatest thrill in the world for a child of God is to be filled with the Spirit of God and to have the Spirit of God take the things of Christ and make them real to us. What joy that brings to our hearts! If you have been in the presence of God to worship, you will have joy in your heart and you will have a song in your heart. Some of us have difficulty getting that song to our lips -- I always have! -- but it is certainly down in my heart. It is wonderful to worship Him.

I want to recapitulate what we have said concerning the sanctuary here on earth which is inferior to the one in heaven. To do so, I will share from an outline put out by a good friend of mine, Dr. Warren W. Wiersbe (Be Confident). This is what we have seen concerning the sanctuary here on earth:

1. It was on earth. It was a worldly sanctuary, that is, it was made of earthly things, material things. It was erected on this earth down here.
2. It was but a shadow of things to come. It never was the reality. So many of us have things mixed up. We go back and study about the tabernacle, and we can really get our interest centered in that earthly tabernacle. But, at best it was just a shadow, a picture of the real one that is in heaven.
3. It was inaccessible to the people. You just couldn't get in there. If you had been an Israelite in that day, you couldn't go rushing into the presence of God. You would have been stopped at that first entrance. You would have needed a sacrifice there, and you couldn't have gone any further -- the priest served for you. However, today we are a priesthood of believers, and each one of us has access to God. That is one of the great privileges we have because Christ has rent the veil in twain. He has gone into the presence of God, into the face of God. He is right there, my friend, and He is there for us. The Israelites didn't have that privilege under the old covenant.
4. It was temporary. But the Lord Jesus Christ is going to keep the way open for eternity. I have a notion that Vernon McGee is going to need someone who will keep it open for him throughout eternity. The earthly tabernacle was only a temporary arrangement.
5. It was ineffective to change the hearts of the people. This is the thing I want to emphasize above everything else. The earthly sanctuary had nothing in the world to do with changing people's lives. But today you can come to Christ, and He can change your life. He alone can enable you to worship God in spirit and in truth and make Him a reality in your life. Many folk today just play church -- like we played house by the hours when we were kids. I know a lot of Christians who are grown up and have gray hair, and

they're still playing church. They go to committee meetings, they're on the board, some sing in the choir, some teach a Sunday school class -- they are as busy as termites and just about as effective. They think they are serving God. My friend, you can never serve Him until you have worshiped Him.

### **The Superior Sacrifice (9:11-28)**

But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building [[Heb. 9:11](#)].

"Of good things to come" really means good things that have come to pass. Oh, the good things that have come through Him!

"A greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands." This tabernacle is nothing that man has built down here. The better tabernacle does not belong to this natural creation as to materials or builders.

Let me say this very kindly. All of this business today of trying to sweeten up the worship service with pictures and stained glass windows and candles and crosses ministers to the flesh. It is fleshly -- it ministers to the physical side of man. It doesn't minister to his spiritual needs at all. We need to recognize that there is a real tabernacle in heaven; there is a real High Priest there, and there is spiritual worship. You can worship Him anywhere, and it is wonderful when people can come together in a church and really worship God. I'm sure many of you have been in a service like that, and it is a wonderful thing.

Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us [[Heb. 9:12](#)].

I believe this verse proves that Christ took His literal blood to heaven. If that is not what the writer is talking about here, I do not know what he is saying. "Neither by the blood of goats and calves" -- that is literal blood. "But by his own blood," this is the literal blood which He shed on the cross. "He entered in." How? By His own blood. His was a superior sacrifice and the only one worthy of the genuine tabernacle.

"Having obtained eternal redemption for us." Notice that in your Bible the words for us are in italics, indicating that they are not in the original manuscript. They were added to smooth out the translation, which is all right, but they are not the emphasis of the verse. The emphasis is upon the contrast that Christ entered once into the Holy Place and obtained eternal redemption. The Israelite priests went in continually, and they got a temporary sort of thing. Only Christ went in once and obtained eternal redemption. This now puts the authority and the importance upon the sacrifice of Christ, and it reminds us that the life of Christ never saved anyone. You can follow His teachings and think you are saved, but, my friend, His teaching never saved anyone. It is the death of Christ, it is His redemption that saves.

For if the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh [[Heb. 9:13](#)].

"And the ashes of an heifer" is a reference to the ordinance of the red heifer in [Numbers 19](#). The heifer was burned completely and its ashes kept in a clean place. When a man became ceremonially defiled (primarily by touching a dead body), the priest would take the ashes, mingle them with water, and sprinkle the offender. This served to ceremonially purify him so that he could be restored to fellowship. I would like to have you notice that here the heifer has a particular symbolism. A female, instead of a bull, is used. We are told in [1Peter 3:7](#) that the female is the weaker vessel. Our defilement actually comes through our weakness. We are weak, and Christ came down and experienced physically, in the flesh, our weakness.

We are told also that a red heifer was used. The red, I think, speaks of the fact that Christ became sin for us -- not in some academic way, but He actually became sin for us. How do we know that red is the color of sin! Isaiah said, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" ([Isa. 1:18](#), italics mine). So it must be a red heifer, speaking of the fact that He became sin for us.

The animal must also be without blemish. It certainly could not represent Christ unless it was perfect. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.

The red heifer must be an animal upon which a yoke had never been put. This symbolizes the fact that although Christ was made sin for us, He was never under the bondage of sin.

The heifer was to be led outside the camp and there slain before the high priest. In this we have pictured that the Lord Jesus is both the offering and the High Priest -- He offered Himself.

The blood of the offering was to be sprinkled by the high priest before the tabernacle seven times. Many people think that seven is the number of perfection in Scripture. That is only indirectly true; the primary meaning is completeness. It speaks here of the fact that Christ's sacrifice is a finished transaction -- one sacrifice takes care of the sin of the believer.

The carcass of the heifer was to be burned -- again in the sight of the high priest. You see, God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. Jesus freely gave Himself, but we probably have never thought of the sorrow that was in heaven the day He died.

Numbers also tells us that cedar and hyssop were to be put with the sacrifice. This is rather suggestive to me. [1Kings 4:33](#) says, "And he [Solomon] spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall. . . ." Solomon ran the gamut of trees and plant life; he was a dendrologist and knew the entire field. I think this is what Isaac Watts meant by "the whole realm of nature." Therefore I believe this speaks of the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ not only redeemed mankind, but He has redeemed this world. We live in a world that is cursed by sin; it is now groaning and travailing in pain, but it is to be delivered. Someday it is to be redeemed, and sin is to be removed.

A little later in this chapter we are told that even heaven itself had to be cleansed (see [v. 23](#)). Someone says, "My gracious, is it dirty in heaven?" Yes, that is where sin originated,

where Lucifer led his rebellion. Therefore, Christ's sacrifice was adequate and it was complete. It was a finished transaction that covered all of God's creation which has been touched by sin.

Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a present far too small;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.  
"When I Survey the Wondrous Cross"  
-- Isaac Watts

The ashes of the heifer were to be kept in a clean place and then mixed with water when they were used. I think that the water speaks of the Word of God. It is the Word of God which reveals sin in the life of the believer.

The sacrifice of Christ provided redemption for the future -- for your redemption and my redemption. It also provided redemption for the sins of those in the Old Testament. The Old Testament saints were saved by faith -- Abraham was saved by faith. How? He believed God and brought a lamb. Was that lamb adequate? No; it prefigured Christ. The sacrifice of Christ looks forward and it looks backward.

How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? [[Heb. 9:14](#)].

If the blood of animals could remove ceremonial defilement, surely the blood of Christ can take away the guilt of sin. After all, if the blood of bulls and goats had been adequate, Christ never would have shed His blood to do the adequate job.

"Purge your conscience." The ordinance of the red heifer in [Numbers 19](#) speaks of the life of the believer and the fact that as believers you and I need constant cleansing. "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth [keeps on cleansing] us from all sin. . . . If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" ([1John 1:7, 9](#)). You see, the blood of Christ cleanses, not the flesh, but the conscience.

It is the conscience of man that needs to be cleansed. You and I have not really arrived until we enter into this marvelous sacrifice of Christ, recognizing His authority to absolutely forgive and cleanse us from sin. It is the conscience that has been made alert by the Word of God, but it can also rest in a finished salvation. We can pillow our heads at night knowing that our sins are entirely, totally, fully forgiven. We can know that we are right with God because Christ has made it right.

I heard a story of a man who had a little boy who did something wrong and went to his father to ask him to forgive him. The father told the little boy he would, and said, "Because you have come and confessed it, I will forgive you." But the little boy came again and asked forgiveness. The father said, "Sure. I've already forgiven you." The little boy kept coming back and coming back and coming back. Finally, the father said, "Son, I'm going to paddle you, if you don't quit coming to me! I told you I'd forgiven you."



How many times do we find believers who say, "Oh, I'm not sure I'm saved. I'm not sure I'm saved." And they keep going to the Lord. My friend, I think He would say, "I've already forgiven you. If you trust in My Son, your sins are forgiven." We need to enter into that and rest upon His Word.

"Purge your conscience from dead works." Dead works have to do with works that you do thinking they will save you. You see, we are dead in trespasses and sins, and all that a dead person can do is dead works. I have never heard of a dead person doing live work -- it just can't be done. Anything that you do to try to earn your salvation is a dead work.

Because good works are never a cause of salvation but are a result of salvation, the writer goes on to say, "purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." The word serve is actually worship -- "to worship the living God." Worship and service go together. You can't serve God without worshiping Him; neither can you worship Him without serving Him. When I see a lazy saint doing nothing for God, I don't question his salvation, but I do question his worship. Does he really worship God? Oh, if you fall down before Him in adoration and praise, then you are going to get up on your feet to start doing something for Him, my friend.

I had this bit of verse written in the first Bible I ever owned, which my mother had given to me:

I do not work my soul to save -- That work my Lord has done. But I will  
work like any slave For love of God's dear Son. -- Author unknown

And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance [[Heb. 9:15](#)].

"And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament [or, covenant]." The emphasis is upon the fact that He is the mediator of the New Covenant. Those who came under the old covenant, the Old Testament saints, were saved because they were looking forward to His coming when they brought their sacrifices. I do not know how much they understood, and yet the Lord Jesus said, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad" ([John 8:56](#)). Genesis doesn't tell us that; the Lord Jesus did. I believe that all of the Old Testament worthies looked forward to the coming of Christ. In other words, God saved on credit. The blood of bulls and goats never took away their sins. They brought the sacrifices by faith, and when Christ came, He died ". . . for the remission of sins that are past . . ." ([Rom. 3:25](#)); that is, He died for the sins of all from Adam right down to the time of the cross. And since then, you and I also come to Him by faith.

For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.

For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth [[Heb. 9:16-17](#)].

"Testament" could be translated will. If you have made a will and you are still alive, your will does nothing for anyone. It doesn't operate until you die. Now the reference here is to a will that was made by a man who died. He couldn't save anyone as long as He lived.

Don't misunderstand me -- what I am saying is that the life of Christ could never save you. It is the death of Christ which saves you.

Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood.

For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people.

Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.

Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry.

And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission [[Heb. 9:18-22](#)].

The word blood occurs in this section six times, revealing the place and the power of the blood in the Old Testament ritual. "Without shedding of blood is no remission" is the axiom of the Old Testament. Also the blood is very important in the New Testament. As the hymn writer put it, "there is power in the blood of the Lamb." In Revelation we find that the victory was won through the blood of the Lamb, not through some individual's ingenuity, or physical strength, or even spiritual strength.

It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these [[Heb. 9:23](#)].

These heavenly things needed cleansing because sin originated in heaven (see [v. 11](#)). The blood of bulls and goats has never been shed in heaven -- there is no denying that that would be crude. However, the blood of Christ, we believe, is in heaven, and that is not crude at all.

For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us [[Heb. 9:24](#)].

The tabernacle on earth was just a figure -- the reality is in heaven. "Now to appear in the presence of God for us" means before the very face of God. Christ has not entered into a manmade sanctuary. It is spiritual but real. He died on earth to save us. He lives in heaven to keep us saved. He is there for us.

Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others [[Heb. 9:25](#)].

The high priest entered the earthly tabernacle with blood not his own, and he entered often.

For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself [[Heb. 9:26](#)].

"But now once in the end of the world" should read "the end of the age." This has no reference to what some people call the end of the world. Actually, the Bible does not teach the end of the world; it does teach the end of the age.

"Hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Christ came, made under the Law. He appeared at the end of the Law age, and He instituted a new age, the age of grace.

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment [[Heb. 9:27](#)].

Death is in the natural sequence of events for man. For the unsaved man, after death there is nothing but judgment. If the death of Christ does not save you, there is nothing ahead of you but judgment.

Death is not appointed unto all men -- thank God for that. It is appointed unto men once to die, but some are not going to die. I hear people talk today about old age and, oh, how they want to die and get into the presence of the Lord. I don't know about you, but I don't mind waiting. I'm in no hurry to die! I hope I can live until He comes. I don't know whether I will, but that is the way I would like it.

Oh, joy! oh, delight! should we go without dying,  
No sickness, no sadness, no dread and no crying.  
Caught up through the clouds with our Lord into glory,  
When Jesus receives "His own."  
O Lord Jesus, how long, how long  
Ere we shout the glad song, Christ returneth!  
Hallelujah! hallelujah! Amen, Halleljah! Amen.  
"Christ Returneth"  
-- H. L. Turner

These words by H. L. Turner in "Christ Returneth" express the thoughts we cherish about His coming.

So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation [[Heb. 9:28](#)].

This is not speaking of the Rapture, but of His coming as sovereign to judge the earth. (However, believers will not come into judgment.) When He appears the second time it will not be to settle the sin question. He is not going to come the next time to walk around the Sea of Galilee or through the streets of Jerusalem to see what men will do with His sacrifice. He is coming in judgment.

Therefore today we can put it very simply: there is just one of two places for your sin -- either your sin is on you, or it is on Christ. If you have not accepted the sacrifice of Christ, if you are not trusting Him as your redeemer, if He is no authority to you, then there is nothing ahead of you but the judgment of the Great White Throne. No one who appears there is going to be saved, but everyone will be given a fair chance to present

their works and discover that God was right all along. And I have news for you: God is always right. So today if your sin is on you, there is nothing that can remove it but the death of Christ.

When Christ comes the next time it will be "without sin unto salvation" -- that is, He will complete salvation at that time. Our salvation is in three tenses: I have been saved; I am being saved; I shall be saved. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" ([1John 3:2](#)). Now that is going to be a great day. It is going to be a great day for Vernon McGee, so don't you be dissatisfied with me, will you not? God is not through with me.

Down in Mississippi a dear little lady wearing a sunbonnet got up in a testimony meeting under the brush arbor and said, "Most Christians ought to have written on their backs, 'This is not the best that the grace of God can do.' " Well, that should be written on the backs of all Christians. God is not through with any of us. Thank God for that! He is going to appear the second time without sin unto salvation -- He is going to deliver us. But, my friend, He will not come to settle the sin question for anyone who has not accepted Him -- to them He is coming as judge.

## Chapter 10

**THEME:** Encouragement

Without a chapter break, the writer of this epistle continues with the subject of the superior sacrifice.

For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect [[Heb. 10:1](#)].

As he concluded chapter 9 the writer said that if Christ had failed to save in His death at His first coming, there would be nothing afterward but judgment. My friend, if you reject Jesus Christ as Savior, you will have the saddest funeral possible. I have conducted many funerals, and some of them were for unsaved people. There is no sorrow like that of a funeral in a family of unsaved people -- and that's the way it should be. I recall one instance in which a wife, who was almost an alcoholic, had lost her husband. She had leaned on him a great deal. I tried to give a message, not of comfort, but of good news, presenting the gospel. Afterward she came to me, looked into my face and asked, "Is there any hope at all?" I said, "Well, there is a hope for you." There was no hope for him whatsoever. He was a blasphemer, and he had told me that he had no use for the church; he had no use for Jesus Christ; he had no use for anything Christian. There was nothing ahead for him but judgment.

Beginning with this word for the writer continues the theme of Christ's sacrifice for sin.

"For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things." The Mosaic Law served a good purpose in that it was a picture which taught Israel. Because God had taught Israel so thoroughly, He judged the nation severely.

When the Lord Jesus was there in the flesh He said, ". . . how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!" ([Luke 13:34](#)). My friend, if you don't believe that God's judgment was really a severe one, go to Jerusalem and walk around the streets of old Jerusalem. Walk in the area where we know Jesus moved. All of it is covered over with debris today. Why? Because the city has been judged. Oh, how often the Lord had attempted to gather His chosen people to Himself! He had given them the Old Testament with the clear teaching of the tabernacle ritual.

Contrast the light that they had to the darkness in which my ancestors lived way up there in Germany. Boy, were they pagan and heathen in those days! And my ancestors over in Scotland were dirty and filthy. Then the gospel came to them, and, thank God, some of them trusted Christ. I had a grandfather on my father's side who apparently was a godly man. I am thankful for the men who carried the gospel to Europe. That gave the Gentiles a break, you see.

But the nation of Israel had the Old Testament, which was (and still is) a picture book, a book of ABCs. That is the reason so many folk miss its meaning. When theologians come to it, they have to find something profound in it. But it is a simple picture book in which God is trying to tell all of us little children down here that He died for us. It is just as simple as that, my friend.

Now let me call your attention to another thing that is very important. Notice that the Law had to do with the tabernacle and the sacrifices. This idea that you can separate God's commandments from His ceremonial law is entirely wrong. If you want to return to the legal system and put yourself under the Ten Commandments, you had better build a little tabernacle for yourself and start raising goats and sheep, because you are going to need them. But, my friend, Christ finished all of that. We now are on a different basis, a higher plane altogether. For instance, God wants to bring joy into your life. The Law never promised joy. There was thunder and lightning, and people were smitten dead at the giving of the Law. But when Jesus came, it was He who died that we might have life.

For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins [[Heb. 10:2](#)].

"For then would they not have ceased to be offered?" If the sacrifice they offered could have taken away their guilt, one sacrifice would have been enough.

It is very interesting to note that after the Lord Jesus died, it was only a few years until the temple was destroyed. And Israel has not been able to put up another temple. Oh, they have a little miniature temple for display over on the new side of Jerusalem at the Holy City Hotel, but they don't have a temple today. It doesn't look as if they will get one soon either. You see, when Christ became the sacrifice, that ended the need for the tabernacle and temple.

Today Israel is not offering sacrifices. I spoke to a very delightful Jewish guide in Jerusalem. His hair was as gray as it could be. He said that it had turned gray when he was only nineteen years of age after he had heard that his father and mother, sisters and

brothers had been killed in Russia. He was a delightful fellow, and he took me around to show me the model of the temple at the hotel I mentioned. As we were looking at it, I asked him (although perhaps I should not have), "Where is the brazen altar?" He looked at me with surprise and said, "Oh, we have come past that. Today we have an ethical religion." Well, a lot of folk have an ethical religion, but, my friend, that bloody sacrifice was necessary that the human family might have forgiveness of sins.

"For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins." They would no longer have any feelings of guilt or consciousness of sin.

But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year [[Heb. 10:3](#)].

So, actually, what those sacrifices did was to remind the Israelite that the sacrificial system was not complete -- or they wouldn't have to come back and repeat it every day. The sacrifices were only a shadow, skian in the Greek, meaning "a hazy outline." The old sacrifices were shadow, never substance. And, my friend, shadows are not enough. You can't live in the shadow of a house; you need a house.

Again, the sacrifices would not have had to be repeated if they had been complete. For instance, when a man says that he is cured of disease and yet he is still taking medicine every hour, that man is not cured. And when a man keeps bringing sacrifices every year, that man is not cured of sin. It is Christ who made the one sacrifice once and for all. In those sacrifices there was a reminder of sins year by year. Here they go through the great Day of Atonement every year. What did it mean? The answer had not arrived until yonder on Golgotha when Jesus cried out, "Tetelestai!" Finished! My friend, then it was finished. And the next year there was no need for a Day of Atonement. In fact, he will tell us that to go through a sacrifice today is to tread underfoot the blood of Jesus.

For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins [[Heb. 10:4](#)].

The blood of the animal sacrifices only covered over the sins until the Lamb of God would come to take away the sin of the world (see [John 1:29](#)).

Now here is a tremendous passage --

Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me:

In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure.

Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written to me,) to do thy will, O God.

Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law;

Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.



By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all [[Heb. 10:5-10](#)].

I want to insert a cross reference here to make this section of the Word of God very meaningful to you. Going back to the Book of Exodus, we find in chapter 19 the preparation for the giving of the Mosaic Law, and in chapter 20 the giving of the Ten Commandments. After that, God makes a gracious provision by the sacrificial system. You see, the altar goes right along with the Law. Then in chapter 21 we come upon something that seems very much out of place. It is one of the most beautiful references in the Bible. The Law has been given, and now God says to Moses: "Now these are the judgments which thou shalt set before them. If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing. [They couldn't have a slave of their own people more than six years.] If he came in by himself, he shall go out by himself: if he were married, then his wife shall go out with him. If his master have given him a wife, and she have born him sons or daughters; the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself. And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl [the lobe of the ear would be pierced]; and he shall serve him for ever" ([Exod. 21:1-6](#)).

In that day if you saw a man walking along with a hole in his ear, you would know that he had been given a wife, and that he had paid the price of permanent servitude for her. It was a tremendous law and certainly a lovely thing, but what is the meaning of it?

Well, let's follow the meaning of it. In [Psalm 40:6-7](#) we read, "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened [that is, pierced with an awl]: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me." This is quoted in the Book of Hebrews and applied to the Lord Jesus Christ. Here is one of the most beautiful pictures in Scripture. The Lord Jesus came to this earth, grew to manhood, and at thirty years of age He began His earthly ministry. When He came to the end of that ministry, He could say, "Which of you convicteth me of sin?" (see [John 8:46](#)). He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. He could have stepped off this earth any day that He wanted to, gone back to heaven and left this earth in sin -- left you and me in the slavery of sin. But He loved us, and God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. So instead of His ear being pierced with an awl, He was given a body. A body for what? For death -- to die on the Cross. "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" ([Heb. 10:10](#)). Referring to that law in Exodus, if a master gave his slave a woman to marry, and he loved her, he could choose to stay in slavery with her. In like manner the Lord Jesus Christ has been given the body of believers which we call the church as His bride. In His prayer in [John 17:9](#) the Lord said to His Father concerning them, "They are mine. You gave them to Me." The Lord loves us; He paid the price for us. But the interesting thing is that He didn't stay in slavery; He went back to the right hand of the Majesty on high, and some day He is going to take us out of the slavery of sin to be with Him. He alone could do that. How wonderful this is!

There is a green hill, far away,  
Without a city wall.

Where the dear Lord was crucified,  
Who died to save us all.  
There was no other good enough,  
To pay the price of sin.  
He only could unlock the gate  
Of heaven to let us in.  
"There is a Green Hill Far Away"  
"There is a Green Hill Far Away"  
-- Mrs. Cecil F. Alexander

What a beautiful picture of Christ this section of Scripture gives us

And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes  
the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins [[Heb. 10:11](#)].

The offerings could only cover the sin; they were an atonement, but they could never take away sins. The offerings were just a reminder that men were sinners and that the sin question had not yet been settled.

But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever,  
sat down on the right hand of God [[Heb. 10:12](#)].

Why did He sit down? Was he tired? No. Did He sit down because He did not want to do anything? No. Jesus sat down because His work was finished -- "one sacrifice for sins for ever."

From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool  
[[Heb. 10:13](#)].

Our Lord is just waiting. There are a few more people to be saved. We pray, "O come now, Lord Jesus," but He says, "No, not yet. We are going to wait, because I want to save some more." He is giving you an opportunity, friend, if you are not saved. [Psalm 110:1](#) says, "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool," referring to the second coming of Christ to the earth. But in the meantime He is waiting for more of the human family to come to Him.

For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are  
sanctified [[Heb. 10:14](#)].

One offering does what many offerings could not do. If Christ cannot save you and keep you, then God has no other way to save you and keep you.

Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he  
had said before,

This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days,  
saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their  
minds will I write them;

And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more [[Heb. 10:15-17](#)].

This is the essential part of the quotation from [Jeremiah 31](#). God says, "I'm going to make a new covenant with Israel." God is not through with them. If you will read your Bible you will see that.

Now let me remind you that in this section of Hebrews we are seeing the greatest division in the Word of God. It is like a Grand Canyon which is placed between the old covenant and the new covenant, the Old Testament and the New Testament. And let's remember that God gave both of them. Referring back to [verse 9](#), notice that it says, "He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second." He taketh away the first (that is, the first covenant), that He may establish the second covenant. When the Lord Jesus died upon the cross, something very important happened: the veil was rent in twain. No longer are men to come to God through the sacrifice of the blood of bulls and goats; now the Lord Jesus has made a way for us through His own body -- a way for you and me. Notice again [verse 10](#): "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once." In the Authorized Version the two words for all that conclude this verse are in italics, meaning they were supplied by the translators. The verse is more accurate without them, because the emphasis is on the fact that Christ did it one time so that sacrifices are to end. It is interesting that ever since the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70 by Titus the Roman, there has been no bloody sacrifice offered in Jerusalem. There are no blood sacrifices being offered there today, and the prospects for them being offered in the near future are very dim. Christ took away the first that He might establish the second.

The importance of this cannot be overemphasized. You see, in the first covenant were many rules and regulations. The old covenant was a law, a law that had a great many details. There was the ceremonial law with many details in regard to the sacrifices; there were the Ten Commandments and other commandments or rules. Actually rules and regulations appeal to human nature. Men feel that it is easy to obey rules, which is the reason so many folk today will tell you that the Sermon on the Mount is their religion. They may not know exactly what it says or what it means, but they like it because it has rules, which they kid themselves into believing they can follow. The whole history of mankind and the multitude of cults and "isms" springing up in our day demonstrate that this is true. Man likes to live by certain rules and follow certain rituals.

Now in the new covenant we are under an altogether different system. Paul had mentioned to the Corinthian believers: "Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament [the new covenant]; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" ([2Cor. 3:6](#)). Some strange individuals have come up with the novel interpretation that this verse means they should not study the Bible! They say that "the letter" means the Bible and it is the Spirit that gives life. Well, of course that is not what Paul is saying, as the following verse makes clear. "But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious. . . ." Obviously, this refers to the Ten Commandments, so now we know that the "letter" is the commandments. The Ten Commandments were the ministration of death. My friend, the Law kills. The Law never saved anyone. It will kill you because it brings you under the judgment of God. It is the Spirit who gives life, and you and I are living in this day when the Holy Spirit is the one who regenerates us, who leads us, and who shows us the will of God.

Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin  
[\[Heb. 10:18\]](#).

"Now" -- the sacrificial system began with Abel and ended with the death of Christ. This verse concludes the doctrinal section.

### **Encouragement (10:19-25)**

[Hebrews 10:19-25](#) is the practical section of this chapter, and it speaks of privilege and responsibility.

Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus [[Heb. 10:19](#)].

"Boldness" is boldness of speech; it has no thought of arrogance. Now notice this carefully -- how do we get into the holiest, that is, into God's presence? By the blood of Jesus.

By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh [[Heb. 10:20](#)].

That veil was torn in two when Christ was crucified on the cross, which indicated that the way to God was open.

"Through the veil, that is to say, his flesh" -- flesh is the same word we find in the prologue of John's Gospel where he said that "the Word became flesh." John didn't say that it was a new and living way open to God, because the Incarnation, the life of Christ saves no one. We enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. Our right of entrance is not through His incarnation but through the rending of the veil; that is, through His death. You and I have the privilege of worshiping God, not because of the life of Jesus, but because of His death for us upon the Cross. Oh, my friend, this distinction is so important!

"By a new and living way." The word new is from the Greek word *prospatos*, meaning "newly slain." It speaks of the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ has opened up for you and me a new and living way to God through His crucifixion, through His death upon the Cross. The old sacrifices won't help you anymore, friend.

And having an high priest over the house of God [[Heb. 10:21](#)].

What a wonderful privilege to have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous, who always lives to make intercession for us.

"Through the veil" -- when Christ dismissed His spirit as He hung there upon the cross, the veil of the temple was torn in two, which opened the way into the very presence of the Father.

Now we have an invitation. Some expositors believe it is directed to the unsaved. I believe it is both to the unsaved and to the saved. Since we have an High Priest at the right hand of God --

Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water [[Heb. 10:22](#)].

This has to do with the dedication of priests in the Aaronic priesthood. Moses sprinkled them with the water of dedication. And they had to be washed, denoting that they were set aside for the service of God. In like manner our dedication to God enables us to draw near with a true heart.

"In full assurance of faith," or in fullness of faith, has nothing to do with the amount of our faith; it has everything to do with the object of our faith. Real faith always depends on the object of faith. You see, faith can be misplaced -- you can put your faith in some individual on earth and be disappointed. Faith is not just believing that there is a God -- all that means is that you are not an atheist. Not only should you have a knowledge of God and know the way of righteousness, but you should act upon your faith. Real faith means that you have really received the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. That has been made very clear to us. In [John 1:11-12](#) we read, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power [the authority] to become the sons of God, even to them that [do no more or less than] believe on his name." Faith in Christ means to receive Christ as Savior. Faith is action based on knowledge. God never asks us to take a leap in the dark. I disagree with the theologian who said, "Faith is to leap in the dark." If this is true, don't leap, because you may find yourself going off a ten-story building! You don't need to leap in the dark, because God has given us knowledge. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" ([Rom. 10:17](#)). God has put down a foundation for our faith. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" ([1Cor. 3:11](#)). You get on the foundation, friend. That's knowledge, but it is faith that puts you there. Faith is action that is based on knowledge, which means to trust Christ personally as your Savior.

"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." This means that you and I as believers are members of a priesthood. One of the great truths that John Calvin recovered was the priesthood of all believers. Every believer is a priest, and, as such, you can come to God with boldness of speech. So many people ask the preacher to pray for them, which is all right, but we need to remember that all believers have access to God. You have as much right in God's presence as I have, or as anyone else has, because we come by this "newly sacrificed" way that Christ has made for us. It is on that basis that we come to God.

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) [\[Heb. 10:23\]](#).

"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith." Actually, "faith" has in it the thought of hope. Let us draw near to God, but let us hold fast our confession of faith. Why? Because we have a hope, and hope is for the future, you see. How wonderful it is that we can come near to God in the full assurance of faith, and also that we can hold fast the confession of our faith because we have a hope. As the hymn writer has put it,

So near, so very near to God,  
We cannot nearer be;  
For in the Person of His Son,  
We are as near as He.  
So dear, so very dear to God,  
We cannot dearer be,

For in the Person of His Son,  
We are as dear as He.  
-- Author unknown

We are to draw near ([v. 22](#)). We are to hold fast ([v. 23](#)). And now a third thing:

And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works [[Heb. 10:24](#)].

"Let us consider one another to provoke" -- "provoke" is from the Greek word *paroxusmos*, from which we get our English word *paroxysm*, which literally means "with a view to excitement." Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.

Do I annoy you? Some Christians tell me that I have troubled their consciences. Well, I hope I have troubled your conscience so that you will love one another and so that you will do some good works for God.

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching [[Heb. 10:25](#)].

If there ever was a time when believers needed to come together, it is today. Instead of chopping down each other, we need to draw together in love around the person of Christ.

"Exhorting one another." We need to study the Word of God together. God has something for a group that He will not give to any one individual. One of the reasons I like to teach the Word of God is selfish. It is because God won't let me grow in the knowledge of His Word unless I share it. We are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. If you have a Bible study at your church, be sure to go because there is a blessing for you there that you can't get when you study the Bible by yourself. So these are the three "let us" verses:

Draw near in faith (toward God)  
Draw near in hope (for ourselves)  
Draw near in love (for others)

This presents again the three graces: faith, hope, and love. How practical this epistle is!

"As ye see the day approaching." To the Jewish people who are being addressed in this epistle, "the day approaching" probably meant the day when their temple would be destroyed, which it was in A.D. 70. Remember that the believers were meeting together in the temple. That is where they were on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came. Peter and John were going into the temple when they met the lame man at the beautiful gate. But where will they gather together after the temple is destroyed? The writer is urging them, "As you see the day approaching when you won't have a meeting place, just keep meeting together." And the church started by meeting in private homes, by the way.

### **Danger Signal: The Peril Of Despising (10:26-39)**

This is the most solemn warning of all. In fact, it makes your hair stand on end!



For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins [[Heb. 10:26](#)].

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God! Simon Peter said, "For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them" ([2Pet. 2:21](#)). The warning is to the Hebrew believers because many of them were continuing to go to the temple and some were actually offering sacrifices there. They were keeping up a front, pretending that they were still under the Mosaic Law. In so doing they also were making it clear that the sacrifice of Christ was meaningless to them. Since the animal sacrifices prefigured Christ's sacrifice, now that Christ had died on the Cross, all of that was fulfilled. Therefore, what before had been done in obedience to God's command, now has become willful sin. To continue to offer blood sacrifices which had been fulfilled by Christ was a frightful, terrible thing. They were acting as if the temple sacrifices were going on forever. The writer to the Hebrews is telling them that they cannot look to the temple any more, because there is no longer a sacrifice for sin. If a person rejects the truth of Christ's death for sin, there is no other sacrifice for sin available, and there is no other way to come to God. They are to look to Christ now rather than to the temple. If they refuse to do this, there is nothing left for them but judgment. The Word of God is very expressive in this connection.

"If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth." This means to go on sinning willfully by offering the sacrifices. It is an attitude toward the Word of God which God calls willful rebellion. There is no more sacrifice in the Old Testament or the New Testament for presumptuous sins.

But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries [[Heb. 10:27](#)].

If the death of Christ over nineteen hundred years ago was not adequate, then nothing is adequate. God is not going to do something else to redeem us. Christ is not going to die again -- and, of course, it is not necessary for Him to do so. It becomes willful disobedience on the part of those who "have received the knowledge of the truth" to continue with the temple ritual and offering of sacrifices.

Now he will make a comparison.

He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses [[Heb. 10:28](#)].

Now note the comparison --

Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? [[Heb. 10:29](#)].

This is probably the most solemn statement in the Word of God.

"Wherewith he was sanctified" refers to Christ, the Son of God. They crucified "to themselves the Son of God afresh" ([Heb. 6:6](#)). To act as if the death of Christ is inadequate to settle the sin question, and to go on as if He had not died, is to treat the blood of Christ as something you despise. Knowledge creates responsibility. If, after you have heard the gospel, you turn your back on Jesus Christ -- my friend, someone ought to tell you that you are going to hell! This is not what I say; it is what God says.

For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people [[Heb. 10:30](#)].

Friend, God is going to judge. He is the sovereign ruler of this universe. We are all going to have to appear before Him. God has a sovereign right to judge, which He has not surrendered. "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" ([1Pet. 4:17-18](#)).

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God [[Heb. 10:31](#)].

This is a very interesting verse, and it will be profitable to spend a little time with it. This verse is for Christians and unbelievers also. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God! In [Ezra 7:9](#) we read, "For upon the first day of the first month began he [Ezra] to go up from Babylon, and on the first day of the fifth month came he to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him." In this verse the hand of God is upon this man for good. And God wants to put His hand upon you for good, but sometimes He puts a very heavy hand upon His children. He chastens them -- or, as we say, He takes them to the woodshed. I have been to the woodshed. Maybe you have been there, too. David had been there, and in [Psalm 32:4](#) he says, "For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah." What was God doing? He was chastening David. He had taken him to the woodshed. David tried to cover up his sin, but God forced him to confess it and deal with it. For a similar reason sometimes God's heavy hand is upon us who are His children.

However, God's hand of chastening is altogether different from His hand of judgment. He says, "Vengeance belongeth unto me. I will recompense." God does not take vengeance in a spiteful or vindictive manner. But God is going to judge sin, and that is something that needs to be emphasized in our day. Listen again to the psalmist: "For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them" ([Ps. 75:8](#)). You see, the psalmist as well as the prophet spoke of judgment as a time coming when the cup of wrath will be filled up. And it is filling up today. God is in no hurry to move; He is longsuffering, not willing that any should perish, but that cup of judgment is filling up. And, my friend, it is a bitter cup.

This cup of God's judgment is ahead of everyone "who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace." My friend, if you despise

what Christ has done for you on the Cross, there is nothing ahead of you but judgment. You have no hope whatsoever.

This is the same point the writer is making to these Hebrew believers. Under the Mosaic Law they could bring a sacrifice every year -- or any day if they wanted to. But they cannot do that any longer; that is over. Now they have to turn (even as we do) to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now the writer gives a personal word to these Jewish folk to whom he is writing:

But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions [[Heb. 10:32](#)].

I assume that the Hebrews to whom this epistle was written were saved. There seems to be no question in the writer's mind about their being believers.

Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used.

For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance [[Heb. 10:33-34](#)].

"Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock." The Christians were made a public spectacle.

"And took joyfully the spoiling of your goods." Apparently some of the believers had been imprisoned for their faith while others had experienced the seizure of their possessions. The writer is reminding them of their faith and patience during this trying time.

Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward [[Heb. 10:35](#)].

"Cast not away therefore your confidence" is another way of saying "let us hold fast the confession of our faith without wavering."

For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise [[Heb. 10:36](#)].

Patience and faith are wedded in Scripture. After exercising faith in the midst of trials, then they are to display patience with the future hope of the fulfillment of faith.

For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry [[Heb. 10:37](#)].

I hear the expression many times, "I'll see you next time, Dr. McGee, if the Lord tarry." I've got news for people who say that. The Lord is not going to tarry. Some folks acts as though He keeps putting off His coming, that He is tarrying. He is not going to tarry. It is on His calendar to come. Somebody asks, "When is He coming?" Well, the Lord won't let me see His calendar; so I don't know. I hear some folk talk as if they have seen His calendar, but I think they have been looking at man's calendar, because nobody has seen

God's calendar. However, we can be sure that Christ will come on the day appointed; it is as certain as His first coming to this earth.

Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him [[Heb. 10:38](#)].

This verse is a quotation from [Habakkuk 2:3-4](#), quoted also in Romans and in Galatians. It is an important verse. Each epistle that quotes this verse puts a different emphasis on it. In the Epistle to the Romans the emphasis is upon "the just shall live by faith" -- how God justifies the sinner. Here in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the emphasis is upon "the just shall live by faith." There have been several references to the living God, and this epistle tells of a living intercessor. He is the same one who died on the Cross for us and came back from the dead. The emphasis is upon His resurrection and His being the living Christ at God's right hand. Therefore since we who are His own have a living God and a living Savior at God's right hand, we shall live by faith. As I have said before, our faith is not a leap in the dark. It rests upon the Word of God. The just shall live by faith. Now in the Epistle to the Galatians Paul emphasizes faith; the just shall live by faith.

"If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." Draw back means "to take in sail."

But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul [[Heb. 10:39](#)].

The writer to the Hebrews did not consider that they had drawn back, but he is speaking of the danger of doing so, and he is giving them this warning. Since draw back means "to take in sail," the believer is like a sailor who should let out all the sail. That is what the writer has been telling these folk -- "Let us go on!" His thought is that a believer could reef his sails -- become stranded because of discouragement, because of persecution, because of hardship, because of depression. But since we have a living Savior, let's go on. Let's open up all the sails. Let's move out for God.

You remember the story of the French Huguenots. They were persecuted, and they were betrayed. When France destroyed them, it destroyed the best of French manhood and womanhood. The French Huguenots went into battle, knowing they were facing certain death, and their motto was: "If God be for us, who can be against us?" The nation of France has never since been the nation it was before it destroyed these people.

We believers today need a motto like the Huguenots. There is a lot of boo-hooing today among Christians. There is a lot of complaining and criticizing. There are a bunch of crybabies and babies that need to be burped.

Oh, my Christian friend, the whole tenor of this marvelous epistle is "Let us go on." So let us go on for God!

## Chapter 11

**THEME:** Faith

### **Christ Brings Better Benefits And Duties (11:1)**

Chapters 11 -- 13 constitute the second major division of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Up to this point the epistle has largely dealt with that which is doctrinal, but we are now coming to that which is very practical. We begin with the chapter that is often called "the faith chapter," and that is very interesting because the average person does not think that faith is a very practical sort of thing -- we will find that it is.

Chapter 11 is also called by many "the catalog of the heroes of faith." I want to look at this chapter from the viewpoint of faith -- what faith has done in the lives of men and women in all ages, under all circumstances, from the very gate of the Garden of Eden down to the present moment. This chapter illustrates this for you and me, and these people are witnesses who encourage us to live by faith.

It is so easy to make the Christian life a series of rules. One of the reasons that so many people like to get under the Sermon on the Mount or the Ten Commandments is because men love rules and regulations. It seems so simple and easy to obey rules. Whenever I drive to a new location, I always ask the individual to tell me how to get there. They generally write it out for me: "Turn left here, go so many blocks, and then turn right." I like it that way because it is easy to follow. Life is like that for a great many folk -- they want to follow a neat set of rules. But in this chapter we are going to find people who went an altogether different route. They walked by faith, and that is the way God wants us to walk today.

We will also see in this chapter that unbelief is the worst sin anyone can commit. God has a remedy for every sin but the state of unbelief. This does not mean that there is an unpardonable sin. There is no act which you could commit today that God would not forgive tomorrow. But if you continue in a state of unbelief, God has no remedy for that at all.

### **Definition Of Faith (11:1-3)**

The first statement in this chapter is a scriptural definition of faith:

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen [[Heb. 11:1](#)].

God has two ways in which men can come to Him today. The first is that you can come to Him by works. Yes, if you can present perfection in your works, God will accept you - - but so far nobody has been able to make it. Adam didn't, and no one since has ever been able to do it. Abraham didn't, and David didn't, and Daniel didn't. None of them made it by being perfect. Therefore, this is not a satisfactory way to come to God, but many people are hobbling along that futile route.

The only other way to come to God is to come by faith. Many folk don't find faith a very satisfactory way either and feel like the little girl who was asked to define faith. She said, "Well, faith is believing what you know ain't so." That is what faith means to many. They think it is a leap in the dark, an uncertainty, or some sort of a gamble. If that is what it means to you, then you do not have faith, because "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," which means that faith rests on a foundation.

To other folk faith is a great mystery. It is a sort of sixth sense, some intuition into the spiritual realm, or an open sesame to a new world. Faith to some of these people is like belonging to a secret order into which you are initiated, and there are some mystical works which God will accept in lieu of good works if you just believe hard enough. My friend, the demons do a pretty good job of believing, and they are not saved. There are a lot of cults and "isms" today which are demonic and are run by demons. Faith for these people is like a fetish or some good luck charm which you hang around your neck or carry with you. But that is not faith.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon said: "It is not thy hold on Christ that saves thee; it is Christ. It is not thy joy in Christ that saves thee; it is Christ. It is not even thy faith in Christ that saves thee, though that be the instrument. It is Christ's blood and merit." That is what saves you, my friend. Faith just lays hold of it -- that is all. Faith, therefore, is not something mysterious at all -- it is that which looks to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Faith is not something which is added to good works. Some folk in our churches today treat faith like it is the dressing which is added to the salad of good works. You have a salad and you put French dressing on it, or bleu cheese dressing, or Italian dressing. Many people just add their faith as a dressing on top of their good works. My friend, that is not faith at all.

Let's look at the scriptural definition of faith that is given to us here: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." I like very much what Dr. J. Oswald Sanders (of the China Inland Mission which is now called the Overseas Missionary Fellowship) said: "Faith enables the believing soul to treat the future as present and the invisible as seen." That is good.

"Faith is the substance of things hoped for." The Greek word for "substance" is *hupostasis*. It is a scientific term, the opposite of hypothesis or theory. It is that which rests upon facts. In chemistry it would be the chemical which settles at the bottom of the test tube after you have made an experiment.

In my college chemistry class the teacher would give each one of us students a test tube and ask us to find out what was in it. I would take some of whatever was in the tube and add another chemical or two to it and heat it on the Bunsen burner to discover what was in the tube. One day I nearly blew up the laboratory with my experiment because something had been put in the test tube which should not have been put there. Five years later the janitor who swept out the laboratory told me he was still sweeping up little pieces of the big glass Florence receiver which I had used in my experiment! Fortunately, the glass flew only onto my vest and not into my eyes. I experimented with one test tube for two weeks before I went to the professor to tell him what I thought was in it. I said it was a certain kind of powder and he told me I was right. I had a substance in the bottom of the test tube, and the professor, because he knew his chemistry, was sure of what it was (I'll be honest with you, I wasn't too sure!). But that substance in the bottom of the test tube was what I was looking for. That is the reality. And that is what faith is -- faith is a substance.

Dr. A. T. Robertson translates substance as "title deed." What is the title deed? What is the substance? It is the Word of God, my friend. If your faith does not rest upon the Word



of God, it is not biblical faith at all. It has to rest upon what God says. Actually, it means to believe God.

The question is whether you believe God or not. Don't come up with the "I've got intellectual problems" excuse, because that won't work. The thing that keeps men from the Word of God is sin. It is sin in your life that keeps you from coming to God. It is the heart that needs to believe -- it is "the heart that believeth unto righteousness." When you are ready to give up your sin, the Holy Spirit will make real to you the Word of God.

A very fine man who heads up a wonderful Christian organization in this country sent me (and other ministers) a book he had written and requested my evaluation of it. It is a very fine book, but it is in the realm of apologetics, proving that the Bible is the Word of God. It is one of the best books on the subject I've seen, and I told him so. But I also told him very candidly that I have come to the place in my ministry where a book like that is of no value to me. I already believe the Bible to be the Word of God. I've already been through all those little experiments. I have proven what it is. I know the Bible is the Word of God. I've put it all in the test tube. I've made the experiment. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for." I know it is the Word of God. The Spirit of God has made it real to me.

Paul wrote to the Colossian believers, "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" ([Col. 1:9](#)). To know the will of God is to know the Word of God. He prayed that they might know the Word of God. The Greek word for "knowledge" which Paul used is epignosis. There were Gnostics in that day who professed to have super knowledge. Paul told the Colossians that he wanted them to have super knowledge which was genuine by knowing that the Bible is the Word of God, and he believed that the Holy Spirit would make it real to them.

Don't misunderstand me: I did go through a period in college when I almost gave up the ministry. I had an unbelieving professor who was an ordained Presbyterian preacher. I admired the man because he was an intellectual, but he was taking the rug out from under me and taking it out fast. The things he was teaching were about to rob me of my faith, and I had to go to God in prayer. Then I met a man who had two degrees for every degree the first professor had, and this man put me back on the track. He showed me that there were answers for the questions the other man had raised. So I have the answers for myself. I've got a substance in my test tube, and I don't need to make any more experiments today. I know the Bible is the Word of God.

Therefore faith rests upon the Word of God. Our dogmatism comes from the Book. That is the reason the writer to the Hebrews said in [Hebrews 10:39](#), "But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." There are only two ways to go. Either you are going backwards, or you are going to go forwards. Anything that is alive cannot stand still. Out yonder in the forest there is regression and deterioration taking place, but there is also growth and development. Nothing alive out there is standing still -- it cannot.

"The evidence of things not seen." We have seen that faith is the substance of things hoped for -- that is scientific. The second word used here is "evidence." In the Greek the word is elegchos. It is a legal term meaning "evidence that is accepted for conviction."

When I was studying classical Greek in college, I observed that this word is used about twenty-three times in Plato's account of the trial of Socrates. Evidence is something you take into court to prove your case. It is that which the entire business world rests upon. Business is transacted by faith. I have a credit card, and when I drive into the gasoline station I hand it to the attendant. When he takes the card, he believes the oil company will pay him; he believes that I am the owner of the card and that I am the one who will pay for the gasoline in the long run. I say that man has a lot of faith. The oil company also believes that I'm going to pay. (Actually, they know I am going to pay, because they will take away my card if I don't!) But the whole transaction takes place by faith. Any man who accepts a check written to him by another is moving by faith. This is *elegchos*, evidence which is accepted in a court of law.

Faith is not a leap in the dark. Faith is not a hope-so. Faith is substance and evidence -- substance for a scientific mind, and evidence for a legal mind. If you really want to believe, you can believe. You can believe a whole lot of foolish things, but God doesn't want you to do that. He wants your faith to rest upon the Word of God.

For by it the elders obtained a good report [[Heb. 11:2](#)].

Who are "the elders"? The elders could be one of three different groups. It could be just a group of old people, or it could refer to the office of elder in the New Testament church. Remember that Paul told young Titus that he was to appoint elders in the churches. Or, finally, "elders" could refer to Old Testament saints. These saints were referred to in [Hebrews 1:1](#), "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers. . . ." The fathers are the elders. This verse could be rendered, "By such faith as this the fathers received witness." These Old Testament worthies believed God, and for them it was not a leap in the dark and it was not a hope-so. Their faith rested upon evidence. Noah built an ark, and he did it by faith. What kind of faith? Was it just some dream he had? No. God gave him an abundance of evidence because Noah walked with God for many years.

The problem with many of us today is that when a crisis comes to us and we ought to be able to rest in God and lay hold of Him, we are not able to do so. When we haven't been doing it all along, it is such a new experience for us that it is very difficult to do. However, if you learn to trust God when the sun is shining, it is easier to trust Him on the day when there are dark and lowering clouds in the sky and you are in one of life's storms.

"The elders obtained a good report." Because they were wonderful people? No, because they believed God. I think Abraham was a wonderful man. He probably had more going for him than the best Christian today. Even the world would have counted him an outstanding individual. But we are told that it was by faith that Abraham believed God. "Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness" (see [Gen. 15:6](#)). God put righteousness to his account, not because of his good works, but because he believed God. "The elders obtained a good report," and they did it by faith.

God wants us today not only to be saved by faith, but to walk by faith. Christ died down here to save us -- we look back in faith to Him. Now we walk daily by faith -- we look up to Him, the living Christ. That gets right down where the rubber meets the road. That's

for right now. Are you going shopping today? Are you going to work? Are you going to school or to some social engagement? Well, then go by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We walk by faith, not by sight. That is how God wants us to live this life.

Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear [[Heb. 11:3](#)].

There are two explanations for the origin of this universe. One is speculation, and the other is revelation. By faith we accept revelation, and, my friend, by faith you will accept speculation. Speculation has many theories, and many of them have been abandoned. Right now the theory is evolution, but even evolution, I am told, is going out of style today. It is the best the unbeliever can hold on to, but it is mere speculation, and they have to have a whole lot of faith to go along with it!

"Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God." Actually, this could read, "the ages were set up by the Word of God." The Word of God, we have already been told, is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword. The Word of God is more powerful than an atom or hydrogen bomb. Someone has said that atom bombs come in three sizes: "big," "bigger," and "where is everybody?" Well, the Word of God is even more potent than that, because the Word of God has the power to transform lives. And when you and I come to the Word of God, we either accept or reject God's statement concerning the origin of the universe: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" ([Gen. 1:1](#)). That is revelation. Either you believe God, or you go by speculation. Don't tell me that evolution is scientific. It is not. If it were, then all the scientists would be in agreement -- and they certainly are not in agreement. Today many outstanding scientists are beginning to let go of their worship of evolution. They see so many fallacies in it that they are moving away from it. You either believe God (that's revelation), or you believe speculation. Faith must be anchored in something.

I heard this whimsical story about a guide in a museum who was taking a group of people through the museum and they came to a reconstructed dinosaur. You know how they find one bone and make up the rest of it so that they have a great big dinosaur! Well, the guide said, "This dinosaur is two million and six years old!"

Of course, the crowd looked at him in amazement, and one extrovert said, "What do you mean two million and six years old? Where did you get the six?"

"Well," the guide said, "when I came to work here six years ago, it was two million years old. Now it is two million and six years old!" My friend, that shows how utterly ridiculous all this dating -- which goes back millions of years -- can really become.

Faith means that you have a solid basis for the origin of the universe. I won't have to change my theory as scientific knowledge grows; it has been in operation a long time: "God created the heaven and the earth."

We come now to consider the faith of individuals. I want to give you a quotation from *The Triumphs of Faith* by Dr. G. Campbell Morgan which is fitting at this point. He said, "Life is to be mastered by faith, and not by doubt; it is to be forevermore illuminated by hope, and not darkened by despair; and in its activity love is to be practised in

fellowship." We are going to see this illustrated as we consider the lives of these people. Faith is not some jewel like a diamond which you put in a case and look at. That is the reason I do not want to call this chapter a catalog of the heroes of faith. These are men and women who got right down to the nitty-gritty of life -- faith was operative in their lives. Faith is not something which you put on display in a showcase. Faith rests upon the Word of God.

We are given here the experience of three individuals who lived before the Flood -- antediluvians we call them (one of them even lived through the Flood and after it). Abel is the first, and in him you have the way of faith. Then in Enoch we have the walk of faith. And in Noah we have the witness of faith. These men lived before the Flood, and faith was in operation at that time. These men walked by faith, lived by faith, and were saved by faith.

### **The Faith Of Abel (11:4)**

Now with Abel God put down the principle once and for all that men must approach Him on only one basis: by faith, and that salvation will be by faith in Christ. Not only did Abraham see Christ's day and rejoice, but so did Abel.

By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh [[Heb. 11:4](#)].

I want to go back to the Book of Genesis and the story of these two boys, Cain and Abel. I want us to see just what it was that Abel had and Cain didn't have. What was the difference between these two boys?

In [Genesis 4:1](#) we read, "And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD." What she really said was, "I have gotten the man from the Lord." What man is she talking about? Well, God had made it clear to Eve that there would be coming one in her line, "the seed of the woman." Speaking to Satan, God said, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" ([Gen. 3:15](#)). But, you see, Adam and Eve did not know that the struggle with sin was going to last so long. They thought their first son would be the man who was coming to defeat Satan, but Cain was not the Savior; he was a murderer.

We read further in [Genesis 4:2](#), "And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of the sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground." We ought to stop here and make a comparison between the boys, because they were actually antipodes apart, although they were brothers, the sons of Adam and Eve. The late Dr. Henry Rimmer thought they were twins. I don't think they were twins, but I do think they were more alike than twins today could possibly be. For instance, in a family today you can have two boys, and the first boy might be a fine, upstanding boy. He goes through school, makes straight A's, goes to college, and then becomes a professional man, perhaps a doctor. But the other boy doesn't do well in school at all, and he drops out. He begins to drink and to smoke marijuana and get into trouble. Now what is the explanation? The psychologist will come along and say that according to the Mendelian theory the upstanding young man has taken after an ancestor on the mother's side of the family, but the other boy takes after an

ancestor on the father's side. That is the explanation that is often given, but you cannot use that method with Cain and Abel. Who were the ancestors of Cain and Abel? They didn't even have grandparents. You cannot use the explanation of heredity for the difference in these two boys. I think they were as alike as two peas in a pod -- they looked alike and acted alike in many ways, but they were different.

Neither can you use the explanation of environment as making the difference between Cain and Abel. A great many people today think that environment is what makes the real difference between men. They say that if we could just make the environment all right, every person would be all right. If we could just get rid of the slums and put people into nice homes, then the people would be nice also. But it doesn't always work that way. These two boys had the same environment. I cannot think of a home that was as much the same for two boys as was the home of Cain and Abel.

[Genesis 4:3](#) goes on to say, "And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD." "In the process of time" means at the end of days. I think it was the Sabbath day, for these boys belonged to the first creation, the old creation. They came at a specified time.

"That Cain brought" -- the word brought has in it the thought that it was brought to an appointed place.

"And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell" ([Gen. 4:4-5](#)). Now what was the difference between the two offerings? Didn't both of them come in obedience to God? No, they did not. You see, God had revealed to them that they were to bring a sacrifice, a lamb, and that little lamb pointed to Christ. Someone will argue that Genesis does not say that. No, it doesn't say that, but [Hebrews 11](#) does say it: "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." How could he? He came by faith.

What is faith? Let's look at it again: "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (see [Rom. 10:17](#)). Abel had a revelation from God. So did Cain. They were both in the same family. But Cain ignored it, and he brought what he wanted to bring, the fruit of the ground -- that which he had produced. In other words, here is the first man who brought his works to God. A lot of people are still coming to God the same way -- they come by works. They have done this and that. Cain brought that which he had raised.

But Abel brought a lamb and slew it. If you had been there, you might have asked, "Brother Abel, why are you bringing a lamb?"

He would have said, "God commanded it."

"Do you think the little lamb takes away your sin?"

"Of course not," he would have said. "I just told you that God commanded us to bring it. He said to my mother that there is One coming in her line who is going to be a Savior, and that Person is the One to whom this little lamb points. I am coming by faith, looking to the time when a deliverer and a Savior will come."

There at the very beginning God made clear the way to Himself: "Without shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins." We come to God on the one basis that we are sinners and that the penalty for our sins must be paid. That is the reason a little lamb had to be slain. That little lamb couldn't take away sin, but it foreshadowed the coming of Christ who is "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." And it was offered in faith.

Abel's offering pointed to Christ, and he came by faith -- that is the way of salvation. God made the way very clear at the beginning, my friend. Today, though a man be a stranger and a wayfaring man and a fool, he need not err therein. God has made it very clear to us: Christ is the way to Himself; God gave Him to die for our sins. Abel, therefore, illustrates to us the way of faith -- it is the blood-sprinkled way, the way that is Christ.

### **The Faith Of Enoch (11:5-6)**

We come now to Enoch, and in him we see the walk of faith. If you come to God through Christ, then you are to walk with Him. It is then the walk of the believer that becomes important.

By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God [[Heb. 11:5](#)].

[Genesis 5](#) is where we find Enoch mentioned for the first time, and it is a very sad chapter. "This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him" ([Gen. 5:1](#)). We are told that Adam lived an hundred and thirty years and begat a son, Seth. Then Adam died, and Seth lived and begat a son. Then Seth died. "In Adam all die" -- that is the way that it's been going on for a long, long time. The fifth chapter of Genesis is just like walking through a cemetery and reading what is engraved on the tombstones. It really becomes monotonous, but it is still the rather sad story of mankind even today. It is the same picture as the present hour in which we live. Things haven't changed much -- man still dies. Oh, I know we have extended man's life span, but what are a few years when you put them down next to a thousand years, or even eternity?

But in Genesis we read of Enoch: "And Jared lived after he begat Enoch eight hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: And all the days of Jared were nine hundred sixty and two years: and he died. And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah: and Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: and all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: and Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him" ([Gen. 5:19-24](#)). That is the story of Enoch. [Genesis 5](#) gives us a certain genealogy; it follows a very definite line. We are told that all these begat sons and daughters, but we are not told anything about them. Just one particular son is lifted out -- Enoch, the son of Jared.

We are told that Enoch lived sixty-five years and begat a son by the name of Methuselah. Enoch had other children, but apparently his firstborn was Methuselah. "And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah." I do not know what he did before he begat Methuselah, but I'm sure he did not walk with God. It might have been a careless life. It could have been a life that was lived in indifference, or perhaps in open sin. The record



does not say. It simply says that he walked with God after he begat Methuselah. One day he went into the nursery and looked down into the crib at that little fellow who was kicking and gooing -- his name was Methuselah. We always think of Methuselah as being an old man who had such a long beard that it got in his way and he walked on it. But at this time he was just a little baby, and when this man Enoch looked down at that little baby, he recognized his responsibility, and it changed his life. He started to walk with God.

My friend, if the presence of a baby in the home won't change your life-style, nothing else will. Even the preacher won't be able to say much that will affect you, but these little ones have a way of speaking for God, even though they don't say a word. They come out of the everywhere into the here, and they seem so fresh, and somehow or other they bring a message from God. Certainly Methuselah did for this man Enoch, and it changed his life-style.

The record tells us that after Methuselah, Enoch had other children, but it does not tell us that he died. Notice: "And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him." In Enoch we see the walk of faith. The writer to the Hebrews says, "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death . . . for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." His walk pleased God because he walked by faith, not by rules and regulations. He believed in God, and he walked in a manner that pleased Him. Then God took him. He didn't die -- he was translated. This is the first rapture of a man recorded in the Bible. He was removed from this earth's scene and was taken away.

We have quite a picture here, by the way, which I think has a spiritual message for us. There are those who believe the church will go through the Great Tribulation period, and they have used Noah as an example. But Noah represents, not the church, but those in the world who are going to be saved during the Great Tribulation. God is going to keep them. Who are they? They are the 144,000 of Israel and also a great company of Gentiles. They are not part of the body of believers that we designate as the church. We are told in the Book of Revelation that before the winds of the Great Tribulation begin to blow across the earth and the four horsemen of the apocalypse begin to ride, 144,000 out of the nation Israel will be sealed and also a great company of Gentiles. These are represented by Noah. My friend, God can keep you in the Great Tribulation, but it is not a question of whether or not God can keep you, the question is what God says, and He says He is going to remove the believers. He told the church in Philadelphia, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" ([Rev. 3:10](#)). What hour is going to try the earth? The only one mentioned in Scripture is the Great Tribulation period. This great company of both Jews and Gentiles is to be kept -- and Noah represents them. Enoch is the man who represents the church. Enoch didn't go through the Flood. He had been translated. He was not in the ark. God could have put him in the ark, but He didn't. He could have kept Enoch in safety during the Flood, but instead He removed him, and that is what He is going to do with the church -- Enoch represents the church.

"By faith Enoch was translated." Translated is a good translation, because it means to take something out of one language and put it into another. I have enjoyed listening to the tapes of our radio Bible study broadcasts in Spanish although I can't understand a word

that is being said. The man who is giving my message in Spanish is reading it, but you would never know it. He's doing an excellent job. The manager of the station in South America says they have everything in that broadcast except my Texas accent! Well, I like the way the man does it, and it is a translation. It was taken out of the English language and put into the Spanish language for South America.

Enoch was translated out of one sphere of life and translated into another. The best way I know to describe it is the way it was told by a little girl who came home from Sunday school, and her mother asked, "What did your teacher tell you about today?"

The little girl said, "She told us all about this man Enoch." You can see that this was a good Bible teaching Sunday school.

And the mother said, "Well, what about Enoch?"

So the little girl told her mama this story: "Enoch lived a long time ago, and God would come by every afternoon and say to him, 'Enoch, would you like to take a walk with Me?' Enoch would say, 'Yes, I'd like to take a walk with You, God.' And so every day God would come by Enoch's house, and Enoch would go walking with God. One day God came by and said, 'Enoch, let's take a long walk today. I want to talk to you.' So they started out. Enoch got his coat -- even took his lunch, and they started walking. They walked and they walked and they walked, and finally it got late. Enoch said, 'My, it's getting late, and I am a long way from home. Maybe we'd better start back.' But God said, 'Enoch, you are closer to My home than you are to your home, so you come on and go home with Me.' And so Enoch went home with God." I don't know how to tell the story any better than that. And that is what will happen one day with the church. The church, that is, the body of true believers, walking with God like Enoch was, will one day go home with Him. The Lord Jesus is coming: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" ([1Thess. 4:16-17](#)).

But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him [[Heb. 11:6](#)].

"But without faith it is impossible to please him." Enoch pleased God. How did he do it? By faith. My friend, unless you are willing to come God's way and believe Him, you cannot possibly please God.

"For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." In this Hebrew epistle there is a great deal said about rewards, and the reason is that the emphasis is on the Christian life. In light of the fact that we have a living Savior up there who is for us, there is a reward for living the Christian life. But salvation is not a reward -- it is a free gift. You work for your reward, but not for salvation. Salvation comes by faith, and the walk of the Christian is also by faith. Enoch walked with God by faith.

## **The Faith Of Noah (11:7)**

By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith [[Heb. 11:7](#)].

Abel showed the way of faith; Enoch illustrated the walk of faith; and now Noah is the witness of faith.

"By faith Noah . . . to the saving of his house." Many of us are accustomed to saying that Noah preached 120 years and never made a convert. Actually, that is not quite accurate. It is true that he didn't win any of the Babylonians living there in Babel, but he surely won his family. He led every member of his family to the Lord, and that was really something.

Again, we need to go back to Genesis and look closely at this man Noah. We are told in [Genesis 6:5](#), "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." That is a sad commentary on mankind. Man surely got away from God in a hurry after he left the Garden of Eden. However, we are told that there was one godly man left: "These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God" ([Gen. 6:9](#)). Does this mean he was only a nice man who paid his debts and did many helpful things for people? No, he did more than that: "Noah walked with God." How did he walk with God? The writer to the Hebrews tells us: "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house."

This man Noah believed God when God told him He was going to destroy the earth by a flood. There are some people who suggest that up to this point it had never even rained on the earth -- and that is probably true. But way up on dry ground, probably near Mount Ararat, away from even the Euphrates River, this man Noah began to build a boat because God said there was going to be a flood.

God gave Noah the instructions for the boat. It wasn't that clumsy-looking thing that you see pictured in Sunday school papers. When I was a little boy, my thought was, I'd sure hate to be in that boat! Probably it was very modern-looking equipment, and the size and construction of it would conform to modern ship building. We are told that the length of it was 300 cubits, the breadth of it was 50 cubits, and the height of it was 30 cubits. And it didn't have just one little window in the side. God said to Noah, "A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it" ([Gen. 6:16](#)). The window went all the way around the top, and the roof came down over it. The ark was 300 cubits, or about 450 feet, long, and it had three decks. The men in that day were good builders and they were familiar with this type of construction. Therefore Noah began to do what I'm sure the population in his day considered to be a very foolish thing. I'm of the opinion that the sightseeing buses ran a tour out to where he was building the boat -- and I'm sure it was a popular tour.

I have often wondered what it was that brought Noah's three sons, Ham, Shem, and Japheth, back home. These boys, I'm sure, had moved away and started their own businesses. Perhaps Ham was a contractor, a successful builder himself, down in Babel.

Maybe one day he was meeting with a contractors' convention where he heard a man telling about a trip he'd made to the north country. There he had heard of a man who was building a boat on dry ground. He felt it was really ridiculous, and everybody agreed, including Ham. But then Ham, knowing his dad lived up there and having heard some things about his dad, asked the man if he had seen the boat builder. The man said he had seen the builder and the builder's name was Noah. Ham probably turned white when he heard that. He stood up and said, "Listen, that's my father who is building that boat. I agree with you -- it sounds foolish. I laughed as you laughed, but you don't know my dad. My dad walks in the fear of the living God. I've gotten away from that, but if my dad says a flood is coming, it's because God has caused him to give out a message of warning. You can just put it down that God has spoken to him and a flood is coming. I was brought up in that home, and I know that I might cut corners but my dad wouldn't. My dad never told a lie. My dad lived for God. If you don't mind, I'm going to get my hammer and saw, and I'm going up there to help him build that boat!" I think Shem and Japheth had similar experiences and went back home to help their dad. Why? Because this man Noah had a witness for God.

My friend, I say this very candidly, the most important thing you can do is to witness to your own family -- not by everlastingly giving them the gospel, but by living it before them and letting them see that you have a reality in your life. This reminds me of an encounter that Gypsy Smith had when he was holding meetings in Dallas, Texas. A lady came up and told him that God had called her to preach. He felt the same way about women preachers as I do, and so he asked her if she was married. She was. He said, "How many children do you have?" She had five children. "Isn't that wonderful," Gypsy told her, "God has called you to preach, and He's already given you a congregation!" May I say to you, whether you are a preacher or not, if you are a child of God and you have a family, that is your congregation. God gave you that congregation. Noah won his family. No one outside his family believed, but his family believed because they knew his witness. Noah "prepared an ark to the saving of his house." What a wonderful thing that he was able to do that!

### **The Faith Of Abraham And Sarah (11:8-19)**

We come now to Abraham, the man who is known as the man of faith. That is the way he is identified in the Word of God. Abraham is the supreme illustration of faith in the Epistle to the Romans and also in the Epistle to the Galatians. The writers of the Gospels refer to him, and even the Lord Jesus said, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad" ([John 8:56](#)). In Abraham we will see the worship of faith.

By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went [[Heb. 11:8](#)].

We have seen in this epistle that the worship of God leads to obedience to God. It leads to work for God. It leads to doing the thing God wants you to do. We do not need to spend time browbeating people, telling them they should get busy for God -- that is not the proper motivation. But if they can truly worship God and catch something of the glory of the person of Christ, then you can depend on them to work for God and to obey Him. The

most important word in this verse and in this entire section is obeyed, and worship leads to obedience.

In [Genesis 12](#) where the story of Abraham begins, we read that he came out of Ur of the Chaldees and went to Haran. He delayed in Haran and lost a great deal of time, but finally he went to the land of Canaan. When he appeared in the land, God appeared to him. "And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him" ([Gen. 12:7](#)). Everywhere this man went he built an altar. When he came into the land of Shechem he built an altar. When he went down to the plains of Moreh he built an altar unto the Lord. Everywhere Abraham went he built an altar to God. I have been impressed on my trips to the Holy Land with the number of buildings that Herod put up. He not only built the temple, which was never really completed, but he also built palaces and forts and cities all over that land. But there was no actual worship of God on his part. All Abraham did was put up an altar, but he worshiped God, and that led to obedience of God. He worshiped God by faith; then he obeyed God by faith.

By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:

For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised [[Heb. 11:9-11](#)].

When God told Sarah at ninety years of age that she was to have a child, she laughed because it was ridiculous -- it seemed utterly preposterous. She couldn't accept it, but God gave her the strength and power to believe Him. Many of us need such strength. Do you remember the man who brought the demon-possessed boy to the Lord Jesus? The Lord Jesus told the man that He could help him if he would believe. The man said, "I believe. Help thou mine unbelief." The man recognized that he had a weak faith, but the Lord Jesus must have given him the faith because He healed the boy (see [Mark 9:17-27](#)). Sarah had a little boy named Isaac. Why? She "received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised." Sarah represents the power (or strength) of faith.

Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable [[Heb. 11:12](#)].

This is what happened, and it all took place by faith. But notice that Abraham and Sarah never saw the fulfillment of God's promise to them:

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth [[Heb. 11:13](#)].

Walking by faith will cause all of us to recognize that as children of God we are just pilgrims and strangers down here on this earth.

For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country [[Heb. 11:14](#)].

Faith looks out yonder to the future. And the child of God today is looking to the future.

I am not in the employ of the local chamber of commerce, but I very frankly love Southern California. I have lived here longer than I've lived any place in my life -- since 1940 -- and I love it, in spite of the smog and the traffic and all these people who followed us out here. I wish we could have put a wall around California (after we got here, of course!), and then we could have had this wonderful place to ourselves. All of us who have come out here certainly haven't helped the place, but I still prefer it to any other. I have a "ranch" out here in California. It's not what you call a big ranch -- it's about 72 feet wide and about 128 feet deep. But I have my house right in the middle of it, and I have it well stocked. I have orange trees, avocado trees, tangerine trees, nectarine trees, apricots, plums, and lemons. You see, I'm really a rancher. The other day I just looked up and thanked the Lord that He gave me that place. It is the first place I have ever owned and paid for, but He gave it to me, and I thank Him for it. However, I told Him, "Don't let me get in love with this place, or I won't want to leave it to go to a better place." We are strangers and pilgrims down here, because we are walking by faith, looking to a better place. "For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country."

And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city [[Heb. 11:15-16](#)].

Anyone can turn around and go back to the world if he is satisfied with the things of the world. However, a child of God, by faith, is going ever onward.

By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son [[Heb. 11:17](#)].

Now we come to the end of Abraham's life, and the supreme sacrifice he made in offering up Isaac, the boy that God had given to him.

Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called [[Heb. 11:18](#)].

Abraham had other children, but Isaac is the one called "his only begotten." (The word son in [verse 17](#) is not in the original text.) Isaac was the only begotten because God gave the promise concerning him.

Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure [[Heb. 11:19](#)].



God did not ask Abraham to offer up Isaac until he had come to the end of his life. The reason is that Abraham would not have had the faith to do it. God will never test you "above that ye are able" (see [1Cor. 10:13](#)). Therefore God never asked Abraham to give up Ishmael, that is, to sacrifice him on an altar. Do you know why? Well, to begin with, Ishmael wasn't the promised son. And the second thing is that Abraham would not have done it, you can be sure. Abraham even begged God not to send Ishmael away but to let him keep the boy and make him the son of promise. You see, Abraham wasn't ready at that time to do such a thing. And certainly at the beginning of Isaac's life when he was just a baby, Abraham never would have offered him. When Isaac was about thirty-three years of age, Abraham was ready to obey God and trust Him. Therefore, we have here the testing of faith.

I want to look at Abraham a little bit differently from the way we ordinarily see him. We usually think in terms of the great promises which God made to him concerning the land to be given to him and the multitudes which would come from him. But what was it that Abraham actually received during his lifetime? What was it that he actually saw? He did not see the fulfillment of those great promises, but what God did give to him was a home. When he was a young man living in Ur of the Chaldees, he one day said to a beautiful young girl, "I love you. I want to marry you." And so Abraham and Sarah got married.

Then one day Abraham came home -- it was a home of idolatry -- and he said to Sarah, "The living God has called me. He wants me to leave this place."

I can just hear Sarah say, "But you have a good business. All your relatives live here. Your friends live here. And, by the way, where are you going?"

Abraham would have to say, "I don't know."

"What do you mean that God called you and you don't know where?"

He said, "God will lead me, and I'm going out."

And Sarah said, "I'll go with you." And so this young couple went out. They didn't have too much faith. They took papa with them and some of the relatives, and they came to Haran. They hung around Haran until Papa Terah died and they buried him.

Then Abraham moved into the land and God appeared to him. God said to him, "Abraham, I am going to do all these things I promised, but I am also going to give you a son." Now that is what is going to make the home -- Abraham and Sarah are going to have a son.

Abraham and Sarah had the basis for a godly home in that day. It was the kind of home God wants young people to have today -- we call it a Christian home. To establish this godly home God did not give them a course or send them to a preacher for counseling. Frankly, we preachers have done too much counseling, telling young people how they ought to do it. We have become too idealistic, but God was very practical. He said, "Abraham, if you are going to have the kind of home I want you to have, you are going to have to get away from papa and mama." That is what God meant at the very beginning when He said to Adam and Eve, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" ([Gen. 2:24](#)). Although Adam

and Eve didn't even have a mother and father, God set down this great principle at the very beginning.

I never thought that I would be a grandfather who would tell the parents how to raise a child. I didn't do so well myself as a parent, but I have learned that it is the easiest thing in the world to tell them how to do it. Well, they will make mistakes, but it is none of my business. We made our mistakes, and they will make theirs. Papa and mama are not to interfere with the home of the children. God set Abraham as far away as possible where relatives were not going to be able to interfere. I think this is primary to building a godly home.

God had Abraham leave his home. It was a godless home he left, a home of idolatry. Joshua made that clear (see [Josh. 24:2](#)).

A great many rules and regulations concerning marriage are being given to young couples in our day. I don't want to sound revolutionary, but I do want to say what the Word of God says to do. You can forget the rules and regulations until you are walking by faith. If you are a child of God, you are to walk by faith in that home. The father is to walk by faith and the mother is to walk by faith. And do you want to know something? The home will never be an ideal home. I am weary of hearing folk tell how they went to a counseling session and now they have the most glorious home you have ever heard of. Well, may I say to you, I have been married to my wife for a long time and we disagree on many things. The fact of the matter is, she has a right to be wrong! But we've always been able to come to the place where I could put my arm around her and tell her I love her in spite of the fact that she is wrong. My young Christian friend, if you think you are going to start an ideal Christian home, I think you are mistaken. You will find that you will be tested just as Abraham was tested when he ran off to Egypt. I am of the opinion that all the way to Egypt, Sarah said, "Abraham, I don't want to go down to Egypt." But they went to Egypt. He almost lost Sarah to someone else down there because he lied and said she was not his wife. That certainly is not an ideal home, is it?

When Abraham returned to the Promised Land from Egypt, we find that he had trouble there with his nephew. Maybe Abraham should have left him in Ur of the Chaldees, but finally Lot moved down to Sodom, leaving Abraham alone up in the hill country. Here again, we see that neither Abraham nor Sarah were what we would call ideal. Abraham doubted God. He didn't believe that God ought to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. God had to make it clear to him that what He was doing was a righteous and just thing. And He had to make it clear to Sarah that He could give her power to have a son. He gave them that little child to raise in their home.

Abraham and Sarah's home was the kind of home God wants you to have. If you think that following a few little rules is going to avoid all the rough places and hardships in life, you are wrong. You will find out that one day you will argue with your wife. You are going to find out that one day you are going to have a problem with the child God gives you. Your home will not be ideal by any means. How are you going to handle all these problems? By faith, my friend, by faith. When you and I have reached the place where we are willing to put our child upon the altar for God, then you and I have arrived.

Abraham and Sarah's home was just about as near to what God wants down here as any of us will be able to attain.

Christian friend, if it is going hard with you and you are having problems, then God is trying to teach you something. Let God be your teacher. Don't run to your pastor or think you can take a course that will solve all your problems. You and I are going to have problems, but if we walk by faith, He will see us through.

Abraham's worship of faith led to obedience in his life, so that it could be said of him, ". . . Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" ([Rom. 4:3](#)).

### **The Faith Of Isaac (11:20)**

By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come [[Heb. 11:20](#)].

Notice that very little is said concerning Isaac, especially when it is in contrast to his father Abraham. What can we say concerning Isaac? He represents the willingness of faith. Isaac was a grown man, probably around thirty-three years of age, when his father Abraham offered him on the altar. That certainly demonstrates his willingness!

"By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come." The one thing that is pinpointed in Isaac's life is his faith in blessing his sons. Now that seems a very strange thing. Isaac was a well digger. He would dig a well in a certain place, and the enemy would take it away from him. He would then dig another well, and again it would be taken away from him. In many ways he was a rather colorless individual, but the thing that characterized him was willingness. He was willing to bless Jacob and Esau concerning things to come, but there was nothing in the immediate present that would cause him to bless them.

### **The Faith Of Jacob (11:21)**

We come now to a very colorful individual --

By faith Jacob, when he was a-dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff [[Heb. 11:21](#)].

This man Jacob lived a life of faith in relationship to his father, and to his son Joseph, and to his grandsons. But the one thing that was selected out of his life happened when he was dying. You must wait until the end of this man's life before you can say that he was a man of faith. At the time of his death he blessed both of the sons of Joseph, his grandsons, and he worshiped "leaning upon the top of his staff."

There are several things which we can observe from the life of Jacob. He is an illustration of human nature and of the fact that it is by grace that we are saved. If it had not been for the grace of God, Jacob would have been lost. He had no human merit -- none whatsoever. I'm not sure but what that is a picture of all of us.

Nothing in my hand I bring, Simply to Thy cross I cling. "Rock of Ages"  
-- Augustus M. Toplady

Dr. J. Hudson Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission, had a way of emphasizing the fact that before God we are nothing, and that God is the only one who can take nothing and do something with it. He told the story of a young, self-confident missionary who arrived on the field with his wife. Finally one day the young fellow came to Dr. Taylor and told him that it was difficult for him to think he was nothing. "Young man," Dr. Taylor said, "you are nothing, whether you believe it or not. You can just take God's word for it!"

This man Jacob is a picture of our human nature. We hear a great deal today in psychology about prenatal care, natal care, and postnatal care, and how important these are in shaping the life of the individual. The gynecologist and the psychologist give a lot of emphasis to the care of a baby before birth, at birth, and immediately after birth. What can be said of Jacob's life in these respects? The Bible tells us that Jacob and Esau struggled within their mother. Even before birth, Jacob was wrestling and trying to get the upper hand! He struggled even at birth. He came out last, but he came out holding on to the heel of his brother. He was a heel-grabber, and he was that all of his life. Also Jacob was a deceiver and he was a rascal. God, however, did transform his life.

First of all, in the life of this man, we find that he was a deceiver in relationship to his father. God had promised Jacob the blessing, but he couldn't wait for it. He took it from his brother Esau by a very deceptive method, which forced him to leave home, and he spent the night in Bethel. He was very homesick, but no change had taken place in his life. Even when he went down to live with his Uncle Laban he was still relying on his wits. Then God had to stop him when he was finally returning to the land. The Lord wrestled with him that night at the brook Jabbok. That night God crippled him -- He had to get Jacob.

Later in the life of Jacob we see that the very sin he committed came home to him in the life of his son Joseph. One day his sons brought that very bloody coat of many colors which belonged to Joseph, and they said to Jacob, "Is this the coat of your son? Do you recognize it?" And Jacob began to weep. In the same way in which he had deceived, he was deceived by his sons into thinking that Joseph had been killed. The sins of the fathers are visited upon the children -- this is certainly an example of that.

However, at the end of this man's life, the writer to the Hebrews shows us Jacob's faith in relationship to his grandsons, Ephraim and Manasseh. "By faith Jacob, when he was a-dying. . . ." He is on his deathbed, and this is the first thing in his life you can lift out and say, "By faith Jacob. . . ."

He "blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped." For the first time there will be obedience in his life. It has always interested me that he worshiped "leaning upon the top of his staff." What staff? Remember that he had been crippled, and he had a staff that enabled him to walk. Even when death came, this man did not want to lie down and die. There was no blessing in the life of Jacob. It was a life of sin and deception, chicanery and crookedness -- and no blessing ever eventuates from sin.

The important thing for you and me to see is that God can take any life and straighten it out. Where there is confusion and deception, if there is faith anchored in the Lord Jesus

Christ, we can lay hold of Him. Faith was operative in the life of Jacob, but we have to come to the end of his life to see it.

### **The Faith Of Joseph (11:22)**

By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones [[Heb. 11:22](#)].

I am confident that the writer to the Hebrews and the Holy Spirit of God could have chosen many incidents from the life of Joseph which would illustrate faith. We could cite the time when this man was down there in Egypt and put into prison. You would think that this was going to be the end for him, and many of us would have cried out in complaint at that time. But that incident was not recorded here. And there are so many other illustrations of faith in the life of this man Joseph. What a contrast he is to his father Jacob! There are no faults or flaws in his life.

There is probably no one in the entire Old Testament who is more closely a type of the Lord Jesus Christ than is Joseph; however, he is never spoken of as a type in Scripture. The analogy between the two is striking. Joseph was the best beloved son as was the Lord Jesus. Joseph had a coat of many colors which set him apart from his brethren and gave him lordship over them; he had a vision and his brethren thought he was a dreamer. The Lord Jesus, too, came with a message, and they thought he was a dreamer. Joseph obeyed his father, and the Lord Jesus said He had come to do the Father's will. Joseph's brethren hated him; it is said of the Lord Jesus, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not" ([John 1:11](#)). Joseph was sent by his father to seek his brethren, and the Lord Jesus came to this earth seeking the lost. Joseph found his brothers who were shepherds in a field; shepherds came by night when the Lord Jesus was born. His brethren mocked Joseph, refused him, and plotted to kill him; the same happened to the Lord Jesus. Joseph was sold into slavery, and the Lord was sold for thirty pieces of silver. Joseph's coat was dipped in blood; the soldiers gambled for the vesture of the Lord Jesus Christ, with His blood upon it. Joseph was sold into Egypt where God raised him up to save (in a material way) the world; the Lord Jesus went down into death -- after having been tempted by the world, the flesh, and the Devil -- to become the Savior of the world -- both Jew and Gentile. While on the throne, Joseph gave bread to the people; Christ is the Bread of Life. While in Egypt, Joseph got a gentile bride; the Lord Jesus is calling out of this world a people to His name. Joseph made himself known to his brethren when they came to Egypt; someday the Lord Jesus will make Himself known to His own brethren.

The interesting thing about Joseph is that he had faith in the dream which was given to him, faith while in the pit into which he was placed, faith all the while he was in Egypt, and faith was what buoyed him up through all the adverse circumstances. You would think that at the end of his life he would be satisfied with Egypt -- but not this man. He said, "When the day comes that the children of Israel leave this land, be sure and take my bones with you" (see [Gen. 50:25](#)). Why didn't they take his body right then and bury it yonder in the land of Ephraim? The reason is quite obvious: this man was a national hero at the time. But there came a day when there rose a pharaoh who knew not Joseph, and when the children of Israel left, they took up his bones and buried them at Shechem in the Samaritan country.

## **The Faith Of Moses (11:23-29)**

Now we move down quite a few years to the time when the children of Israel are in slavery in the land of Egypt. Moses represents the sacrifices of faith.

By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment [[Heb. 11:23](#)].

Moses had godly parents who were willing to take a real stand for God. Faith was involved in the very birth of Moses.

By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season [[Heb. 11:24-25](#)].

We see faith at work in the life of Moses. He was brought up in the palace and would have been the next pharaoh, but Moses had faith to choose the right.

Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward [[Heb. 11:26](#)].

Someone else other than Abraham saw Christ's day and rejoiced -- Moses did.

By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible [[Heb. 11:27](#)].

Moses had faith to act -- faith will lead to action. Many folk today are saying, "I believe, I believe," but do nothing. May I say, faith reveals itself in action. God saves us without our works, but the faith that saves produces works. Therefore Moses "forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible."

Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them [[Heb. 11:28](#)].

Moses had faith to obey God. God said to do this, and Moses did it. This is exemplified in the life of this man. He forsook the pleasures of Egypt, went out into the desert, and came back to deliver his people. This is faith to obey God.

By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned [[Heb. 11:29](#)].

Whose faith do we see here? Is this the faith of the children of Israel? No. They had none. When they saw Pharaoh and his chariots coming, they said in effect to Moses, "Let's get back to Egypt as quick as we can! We made a mistake in leaving." It was Moses who had faith. He went down to the water's edge and smote it with that rod; and it was by his faith that the waters opened up and they were able to march over to the other side. Then they sang the song of Moses. The people are identified with Moses, but this was Moses' faith.

## **The Faith Of Joshua (11:30)**



By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days [[Heb. 11:30](#)].

We have in the life of Joshua the watch of faith. If you had not met Joshua about the fifth day they were marching around the city of Jericho, you might have said to him, "It doesn't look like you are getting very far. Why are you doing such a foolish thing? You are a general with a whole lot of intelligence, but you are not using your intelligence."

He would have said to you, "You have forgotten that I saw the captain of the hosts of the Lord, and He told me that headquarters is not in my tent, but in heaven. I found out that I am not the general. I happen to be a buck private in the rear ranks, and I am to take my orders from Him. He said to march around the city, and I am marching around. You just watch -- these walls will come down. I'm following the strategy of Someone who knows."

In Joshua we see the watch of faith. Faith to believe God -- General Joshua had learned that.

### **The Faith Of Rahab (11:31)**

By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace [[Heb. 11:31](#)].

I want to call Rahab's story the wonder of faith.

Her story is in connection with the story of the walls of Jericho. She was living inside the city, and I am sure that after seven days those on the inside were wondering what was going to happen.

"By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not." Many years ago a book was published with the title Religion in Unlikely Places. I do not know if Rahab was included in that book -- I never read it -- but she certainly should have been. Jericho was the last place in the world you would have looked for faith. Rahab lived in a very wicked, pagan, and heathen city -- and she practiced the oldest profession there. Those who practice that profession have usually been considered to be sinners -- until recently, of course, when the "new morality" came along. This woman was a sinner, and yet we are told here, "by faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not." I'm sure that the mayor of the city and others who were in high position felt that they were good enough to have been saved, but they were not saved. We are told they perished in the city because of just one reason: they did not believe God.

We will see that God was very generous in the way He dealt with the city of Jericho. I know the critic finds a great deal of fault with God for destroying the people of Jericho. I had a professor in college who could weep crocodile tears because of what happened to the people in the city of Jericho. The thing that always disturbed me about this man was that he showed very little interest in other people -- including his students, by the way -- but he could really work up a lather when it came to the people of Jericho.

We want to look closely at this woman Rahab, because she expressed her faith in a very definite way. When the people of Israel had crossed over the Red Sea, that word got to Jericho, and the inhabitants of Jericho lost their courage. But they never dreamed that

during flood season the great host of Israel could be brought across the Jordan River. There was no bridge on which they could cross, and the river was on a rampage at that time. How in the world could the people get over? The people of Jericho had felt that they had time to plan a defense and didn't have to worry until the flood season was over.

Then Joshua sent spies into the city of Jericho, and they came into contact with the harlot Rahab. I have a notion she made a business proposition to them, but I do not know whether they accepted or not. I do know they made it very clear that they were on a mission, that they needed protection, and that God was going to give the city of Jericho into their hands. They at least gave her that much information. She took them in and hid them on the roof of her house and no doubt risked her own life in doing that. She asked one favor from these men, "When you take this city, I want you to remember me and my family. I want you to save us." And they promised to do that. They told her to put out a scarlet line in the window to identify her house, and that when Joshua took the city he would be very careful to save her and her household.

Rahab's testimony is found in the Book of Joshua: "And she said unto the men, I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath" ([Josh. 2:9-11](#)).

This is a strange statement that comes from this woman, but it is a tremendous revelation of the fact that God did not arbitrarily destroy the city of Jericho. You see, for forty years word had been filtering into Jericho about a people who crossed the Red Sea. In other words, Rahab said, "It was forty years ago when we heard about that. And I for one believed. Others believed the facts, but they did not believe in God. They never trusted the living God." Later on, they heard how God was leading Israel and that He had given them victory on the other side of the Jordan against the Amorites. Jericho should have profited from that information. Finally Israel miraculously crossed the Jordan River and parked right outside the door of Jericho. What had God been doing? He had been giving the city an opportunity to believe in Him, to trust Him, and to turn to Him.

I think it should be obvious to anyone that if God saved this harlot who believed in Him, He would have saved the mayor of Jericho and He would have saved anyone in the city if he had trusted Him as this woman trusted Him. He saw all of them on one basis -- He saw them all as sinners. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Rahab probably was a more open sinner than the mayor was. I am of the opinion that the mayor's private life would not have stood inspection, and I am sure that was true of many others in that city, but they had ample opportunity to trust God. They had forty years to decide whether they would believe God, and they did not.

If that college professor of mine were still alive, there is a question I would love to ask him. God gave them forty years to make up their minds whether they would trust Him or not. Only one woman made up her mind to trust God, and God saved her. It is obvious

that since she was saved, anyone else would have been saved if they had trusted God. Now if you think forty years was not quite long enough, do you feel that God probably should have given them forty-one or forty-two years? My friend, if after forty years they are not going to believe God, they are not ever going to believe God. God is longsuffering. He is patient. He is not willing that any should perish. Even a harlot who will trust Him, God will save. The people of Jericho believed the facts which they heard, but they didn't trust God. If they had, they would have been saved.

Now when this woman evidenced that she believed God by asking the spies to save her when they took the city, she took a step of faith, and in that step of faith she risked her life. Her faith began to move. Faith goes into action -- it does not sit on the sidelines. So this woman Rahab "perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace." Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. "We have heard what God has done through you, and we believe it," she said. "I trust Him. I trust Him to the extent that I am willing to risk my life." She evidenced the faith that she had.

We see in this woman Rahab the wonder of faith. We see that in this lost world God doesn't view one group of people as so much better than another group of people. God sees us all as sinners, and when anyone will turn to Him, God will save him. How wonderful He is!

### **The Faith Of "others" (11:32-40)**

And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets [[Heb. 11:32](#)].

The writer of this epistle has come to a point in the history of the Old Testament at which he says, "What more can I say now?" He could go in any direction and could list heroes of faith, if you want to call them that. He could demonstrate how faith has worked in the lives of many men and women. So he gives us a list and makes it clear that he is not able to discuss them in detail, but that all should be included in this marvelous chapter.

We see the war of faith in the lives of these men he mentions. Not one of them is dealt with in detail, but all have something in common: everyone mentioned here was a ruler. Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, and Samuel were all judges; David was a king. They were all rulers, and they were all engaged in a war for God. Each one of them won that battle by faith.

I will not be able to go into detail with each of these men, but I would like to take note of this man Gideon. Many people say that all they have in their church is a "little Gideon's band." What they mean is that they have a small number of people. But, my friend, it was not the small number that was significant about Gideon's band -- it was the faith these men had. Yet Gideon was a man who actually had very little faith at the time when the Lord called him.

Gideon was a judge at the time the Midianites had taken the land of Israel. The Hebrews couldn't even harvest their crops -- the Midianites would take it from them. This young man Gideon was down by the winepress harvesting grain. That is not where he should have been. The grain was usually taken up to the top of the hill, pitched up in the air

where the wind could drive the chaff away. In that land the wind blows in the afternoon. But Gideon was a coward. He took the grain down there by the winepress -- way down in the valley, where no one could see him. Talk about an operation of frustration! You can just see Gideon down there pitching up the grain. When there is no wind to blow the chaff away, do you know what is happening? The straw comes falling down around his neck. I can't think of anything more uncomfortable and discouraging than to pitch up the grain and have all the straw down your back!

Well, that was Gideon, and it was at that time the angel of the Lord appeared unto him and said, ". . . thou mighty man of valour" (Jud. 6:12).

That really wasn't the proper address for Gideon, and he didn't think the angel was talking to him. I think he looked up and said, "Who me?" He was the biggest coward of all, and he was willing to admit it. "Why," he said, "I belong to the smallest tribe. My family is the small family in the tribe. And I'm the smallest potato in the family. You picked the smallest pebble on the beach -- I'm a nobody."

And God said to him, "That's the reason I picked you -- because you are a nobody. I want you to believe Me." We will find that God began to strengthen the faith of that man until the day came when with only three hundred men he was able to get a victory over the Midianites. Faith operated in the life of this man Gideon.

How many Christians today feel like there must be some great big show, some big demonstration, some big meeting if the ministry is going to be of the Lord? May I say to you, God doesn't move quite like that. I'm of the opinion that the greatest work for God is being done by individuals and by little groups throughout this country and around the world. I was amazed to meet a man in Lebanon who, by the way, is a member of the Gideons International. He is an active Christian layman and a real witness for Christ. You don't hear about him -- he's not one who is getting publicity. And then, in the land of Israel, there is a very wonderful Hebrew Christian who has been persecuted a great deal, but he is a real witness to God. There are a great many "Gideons" around today, and they move by faith. God will use a nobody if he will trust Him. God is moving in mysterious ways His wonders to perform.

The writer to the Hebrews mentions Gideon, Barak, and Samson. I don't know whether I would have put Samson in the list or not. Samson was a real failure as far as his service was concerned, but He did believe God. There was a time when the Spirit of God came upon him and he began to deliver Israel; he never completed the job, however. The writer goes on to mention Jephthah and David (oh, we could stop and talk a long time about David!) and Samuel and the prophets. But the writer makes it clear that time would fail him to mention them all.

Now notice what all these men did -- theirs was the war of faith:

Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness,  
obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions [[Heb. 11:33](#)].

"Stopped the mouths of lions" -- we know this refers to Daniel, although he isn't mentioned by name here.

Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens [[Heb. 11:34](#)].

This is the war of faith, and these are the victors.

We see now the wideness of faith -- faith has moved into every area of life:

Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection [[Heb. 11:35](#)].

"Women received their dead raised to life again" -- remember the widow of Zarephath whose son Elijah raised back to life (see [1Kings 17:17-24](#)).

"And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection." In other words, he is now talking about martyrs.

And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment:

They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;

(Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth [[Heb. 11:36-38](#)].

Here is another group of people. They didn't gain great victories out on the battlefield. They didn't enter the arena of life before large audiences and perform great feats for God. These are the "others," and they are the ones who, if you want heroes, are really God's heroes. They had trials and mockings and scourgings and bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned and they were "sawn asunder." Jerome insists that it was Isaiah who was sawn asunder, but of course that is only tradition. We don't know who suffered that cruel, horrible death. And others were tested, tempted, and slain by the sword.

I want you to notice a contrast here. Back in [verses 33](#) and 34 when we were talking about the victories which were won, it spoke of how they "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword." They escaped the edge of the sword, but here in [verse 37](#) the others were "slain with the sword." How do you explain this? One group by faith escaped the edge of the sword, and another group by faith were slain with the sword. We have come to a question which is still to me a very difficult subject: Why do the righteous suffer?

I know that if you are in good health today it is easy for you to toss it off and say of others, "Well, God is testing them." However, these people went through all these things by faith. They didn't look upon it as if they were being tested. They endured because they did it by faith. They could trust God when the day was dark, when the night was long, the suffering was intense, and when there was no deliverance for them at all.

Others were tortured; others were slain by the sword. It is wonderful to be able to get up and quote Scriptures such as [Psalm 34](#) which says, "The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. . . . The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles" ([Ps. 34:7, 17](#)). That is wonderful, and God does that. But what about the "others," the others who didn't escape the edge of the sword? What about those who suffered? Stephen could look at the religious rulers of his day and say, "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?" Prophets never had it easy, my friend. Stephen himself was the first martyr to the Christian faith. Before they stoned him to death, Stephen told them, ". . . they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers" ([Acts 7:52](#)). And when the Lord Jesus called Saul of Tarsus, that brilliant young Pharisee, He said, "For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake" ([Acts 9:16](#)). The Lord Jesus has also made it very clear to us, ". . . In the world ye shall have tribulation [trouble]: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" ([John 16:33](#)). Finally, it says of Paul and Barnabas as they went out on one of their missionary journeys that they went "confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation [trouble] enter into the kingdom of God" ([Acts 14:22](#)).

My friend, there are a great many people who have demonstrated their faith by winning battles and by being delivered, but there are others, multitudes of them, who have suffered for the faith. Down through the long history of the church there have been the Waldensians, the Albigenses, the Huguenots, the Scottish Covenanters, and many others.

The poet Martha Snell Nickelson was a member of my church when I was pastor in downtown Los Angeles, and I had the privilege of baptizing her. She suffered a great deal -- so much so that we had to baptize her in the bathtub in her own home. She screamed with pain whenever she was touched. This woman went through untold suffering before she passed on into the presence of the Lord. And right now there are literally thousands of heroes of faith lying on beds of pain. It is nice to read about walking out onto the stage of life and gaining a great victory. It is wonderful to be able to report that you have been healed. But what about those who are suffering? What about that unknown missionary out yonder on the field who is suffering for Jesus' sake? What about the minister who suffers?

Let me pass on to you something which I learned recently that deals with this question. The apostle Paul wrote, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" ([1Pet. 4:12-13](#)). Paul made this statement to the Colossians: "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church" ([Col. 1:24](#)). How could Paul fill up the sufferings of Christ? Wasn't Christ's redemption for us complete and perfect? It certainly was, but there are certain sufferings that the Lord Jesus experienced in His life down here which were not redemptive sufferings. His redemptive sufferings took place on the cross -- none of us can add anything to that. But you and I, if we are going to stand for Him, are going to have to pay a price for it. Some of us may have to suffer just a little.



Will you forgive me for being personal here? When I had my first bout with cancer, the Lord healed me. I rejoice in His goodness and grace and mercy to me. I have gloried in that, and I promised Him that I would give Him all the glory if He would heal me. I guess I have talked pretty loud about what God has done for me. Then I began to receive hundreds of letters from people -- people who have terminal cancer and ask for prayer. I try to be faithful in remembering them in prayer. But frequently I get a letter from a loved one saying that one of these suffering saints has gone to be with the Lord. I especially remember a letter from a woman whose husband had suffered a great deal with cancer and then died. I had to take a second look at this thing. God doesn't always raise up a person from a bed of sickness. While some are healed, there are thousands today who are in the hospitals, thousands lying on beds of pain.

Do you know what the Lord did after healing me of cancer? He gave me gallstone trouble. It took a while for the doctors to even diagnose the problem, and I suffered a great deal. I think the Lord was saying to me, "I'm going to give you a thorn in the flesh so you will keep your mouth shut. You boast too much about the way I moved in your behalf. I want you to remember that I do not always heal everyone. The ones who really suffer are the greatest saints. They are the ones who know what real faith is. You don't know what it is to trust Me in a time like that." The Lord put me flat on my back, and I have never suffered as I suffered at that time. Then the Lord sent me through a battle with hepatitis, and I want to tell you, I thought He was against me. I went to Him and talked this thing over. It was at that time that He spoke to me from this chapter about the "others" -- the others who were slain by the sword, the others who suffered -- and who did it by faith.

My friend, if you can walk up and give your testimony and tell how God has healed you - - and I could join you in that -- or if you can get up and say how successful you have been in business, I want to remind you that there are multitudes of God's saints today who are suffering. They are paying a tremendous price. Do you know how they are doing it? They are doing it by faith. They have lots more faith than I have, and I think they are choicer saints than I am. I have been humbled by many a letter from some wonderful saints who are doing a work for God, tucked away in out-of-the-way places and suffering for their faith.

The writer to the Hebrews is speaking of a company of people who lived by faith. He simply calls them "others" -- I love that! I don't want you to forget the "others" who are today living by faith and dying by faith. The suffering has ended for many of them, and they have already gone into the presence of the Lord and will never have to die again. This passage means something to me that it didn't before, and I hope it means something new to you also.

And these all, having obtained a good report through faith,  
received not the promise [[Heb. 11:39](#)].

What promise is it that they did not receive? God made many promises, and many of them received the promises that He made to them. But the promise is His promise that He will raise them up and that there will be a kingdom established here on this earth. They have not received that promise yet, because God is still today calling out a people to His

name, and, as it says here in Hebrews, "bringing many sons home to glory." "And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise." We are told here the reason for that --

God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect [[Heb. 11:40](#)].

God has us in mind! Wasn't that gracious of Him? "That they without us should not be made perfect." God is very patiently calling people out of this world to His name -- and that is the church. And until that church is completed, He is just going to keep calling them out.

We have seen in this chapter the world and the work of faith. I want to say something, and I hope I will not be misunderstood. I do not want to hear the testimony of a person who has been saved a week or a month or three months, although I do rejoice in their salvation. But let me illustrate my point: I got a letter the other day which told me about a man who accepted the Lord Jesus under my ministry in 1943. He had just died, and I understand that a marvelous testimony was given at his funeral as to the wonderful man of faith he was. When I am told by young people how many have accepted Christ through their witnessing, I want to say to them, "Well, it will be wonderful if three years from today or thirty years from today you can come back to me and say that these all lived and died by faith."

Some people feel that faith is something untried, something you really can't be sure of, something that doesn't really rest upon a foundation. My friend, we have had here a company of witnesses. Many of them lived long lives -- they lived by faith. They found out that it works.

Again may I say that I no longer give apologetic messages, proving that the Bible is the Word of God. I just give messages from the Bible. I let the Holy Spirit minister the Word to folk. I just preach the Word of God to them and, when I do that, I receive many letters telling how their faith has been strengthened. You do not have to tell me how wonderful faith is. I am an old man now. I've been at this a long time, and you don't have to tell me this thing works. I know it works.

You see, when they made the first airplane and even when the thing flew off in the air, there were those present who said they didn't believe it and they couldn't believe their eyes. Well, there are a lot of folk today who are just as blind as a bat spiritually. They say, "I want it proven to me." My friend, if you are honest and are willing to put away the sin in your life and turn to Jesus Christ and trust Him as your Savior, then I would like to talk to you three years from today, because nobody would need to prove anything to you. You would know faith works.

There are multitudes around us right now who can say "Amen" to all of this. They already know that faith works. It's operative. It's real. It is something genuine. My friend, have you come out of the realm of make-believe and into the realm of reality? Have you found out what Jesus Christ really can do for you?

## Chapter 12

**THEME:** Hope

We are in the practical section of the Epistle to the Hebrews where we see that Christ brings better benefits and duties. Chapter 11 is the faith chapter; chapter 12 is the hope chapter; and chapter 13 is the love chapter.

### **The Christian Race (12:1-2)**

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God [[Heb. 12:1-2](#)].

We read in the first part of this epistle of the peril of drifting; that is, of just being hearers, drifting along, and doing nothing at all about God's salvation. Now in the last part of the epistle the writer is speaking to believers of the peril of remaining stationary. He is saying, "Let's get into the race. Let's get moving and not just drift along. We are racers." I would say that one of the greatest dangers in the Christian life is the peril of just remaining stationary, of doing nothing.

When someone becomes lost in the extreme cold of the far north there is grave danger of freezing to death. The first step in that process is to fall asleep. You have to fight sleep, and you must keep moving or you will freeze to death. In a spiritual sense, the danger is the same for us as believers. We have to force ourselves to stay awake and keep moving forward in our relationship with Christ. Otherwise we will just fall asleep.

I like to tell the story about the old cowboy at one of the great camp meetings they used to have years ago in West Texas. A little lady got up and gave her testimony. She said, "The Lord filled up my cup twenty years ago. Nothing has run in, and nothing has run out." The old cowboy sitting in the back spoke out and said, "I bet it's filled with wiggletails by now!" I think that is the condition of a lot of believers today. They can say the Lord has filled their cup, but there's no running over. They've just remained that way. I agree with the cowboy, there are a whole lot of wiggletails in the cups that people are boasting of today.

"Wherefore," we are told, we are to move out, and we are to live by faith. Why? Wherefore is another one of these little words that cement the chapter that goes before with the chapter that is coming up -- and that is what it does here. "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses."

For many years I took the position that the "witnesses" are the Old Testament saints, many of whom are listed in chapter 11, and that they are sitting in the grandstand watching us run the race of life today. I personally couldn't think of anything more boring for them than to watch us run the Christian race down here the way some of us are running it! And I no longer believe that that is what this verse means.

When my understanding of this verse changed, it cost me the use of a marvelous illustration, but I will pass it on to you because it is a very sentimental story which does make a point. Years ago a friend invited me to the kickoff luncheon for the Rose Bowl game in Pasadena where I heard a newscaster tell this story. He told of a famous football coach in the East. The coach had a player who was known for two things. The first thing he was noted for was his faithfulness at football practice. He was the first one out and the last one to leave, but he never could make the team -- he just wasn't quite good enough. The second thing he was famous for was that his father often visited him on campus and they would be seen walking arm in arm across campus, very much engrossed in conversation. Everyone noticed that and thought it was wonderful. Well, one day the coach got a telegram saying that the boy's father had died. The coach was the one chosen to tell the sad news to the boy, and so he called him in and told him. The boy was greatly shaken, of course, and had to go home for the funeral. But he was present at the next game, sitting there on the bench. Then he came over to the coach and said, "Coach, this is my fourth and last year, and I've never played in a game. I'm wondering if today you could put me in for just a few minutes and let me play." And so the coach put him in because the boy's father had just died. To his amazement, the boy turned out to be a star! The coach had never seen anyone play a better, a more brilliant game, than this boy played -- so he never took him out of the game. When the game was over, the coach called the boy off to the side and said to him, "Listen, I've never seen anyone play like you played today, but up to today you were the lousiest football player I've ever seen. I want an explanation." And the boy said, "Well, coach, you see, my dad was blind, and this is the first day that he ever saw me play football."

If this Scripture means that the Old Testament saints who have gone before are sitting in the grandstand watching us run the race, then that story would be a good illustration. However, that interpretation is not accurate at all. The witnesses are not sitting in the grandstand; they are the ones who have already run the race down here. They are the ones who were down on the racetrack as you and I sat in the grandstand watching them run the race of life in chapter 11. And they ran it by faith. Those who would be called a howling success by the world ran the race by faith. And those who suffered what the world would call miserable defeat, also ran the race by faith. Although they suffered and were slain by the sword, they were just as great heroes. They all witnessed to us. We watched them as we went through chapter 11, and there were many more in the Old Testament, as the writer told us that time would fail him to tell of all of them. They witnessed to us, and encouraged us to run by faith and to live by faith.

Therefore the Christian life is here likened to a Greek race. Christ is the way to God, and along the way the Christian as a soldier is to stand firm, as a believer is to walk, but as an athlete, he is to run the race. And one day we are going to fly, my friend -- that will be at the Rapture. We are going to do a little space travel to the New Jerusalem.

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." We have here another "let us" salad. Now this is not a danger signal that is put up here at all, but it is a challenge to us. Let us now get out of the grandstand; let us get down on the racecourse of life, and let us do whatever God

has called us to do wherever He has called us to live and move and have our being. Let us run the Christian race, and let us move out for God. That is the whole thought here.

We are challenged to run with patience, having laid aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us. God has saved us from sin. He has brought us into the heavens, actually, into the holy place, and He has made us to sit in heavenly places. He's given to us His Holy Spirit. But in spite of all that He has provided, the average Christian falls down and stumbles and wanders like a man lost in the dark. What is wrong with the Christian life as it is being lived at the present time? I will come back to the same string which I play on all the time, because I think this is the answer: the problem is that Christians do not go on with God. They get saved, give a testimony of their salvation, and that's all they ever have. They never maintain a serious study of the Word of God, which is essential to growth. They are like the little girl who fell out of bed one night. When the little girl began to cry, her mother rushed in and said, "Honey, how come you fell out of bed?" The little girl replied, "I think I stayed too close to the place where I got in." That is the problem of the Christian today. We stumble and falter and fail because we are staying too close to the place where we got in. We need to go on -- this is a race, you see.

The Christian life is a race -- win or lose -- and it is the only race where everybody can win. Paul wrote, "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all . . ." -- they all run to receive a prize. He went on to say, "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly . . ." ([1Cor. 9:24, 26](#)). And again, he rebuked some of his followers saying, "Ye did run well; who did hinder you . . . ?" ([Gal. 5:7](#)).

We are encouraged by these witnesses. They are not spectators; they are testifying to us. They are in the cheering section, encouraging us to run the Christian life. Abraham is saying to you and me, "Move out by faith." Moses is saying to you and me, "Move out by faith." Daniel is saying to you and me, "Move out by faith."

Now there are two conditions to be met: "Lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us." What does he mean by "lay aside every weight"? Weights are highly unnecessary in a race; in fact, they are a hindrance. We ought not to be using weights.

I remember years ago when Gil Dodds, a very fine Christian, was a famous runner in this country. Some of us went out to the track at the University of Southern California, to watch him run. He ran around the track a couple of times with tennis shoes on. Then he stopped and changed into some other shoes. One of the fellows there asked why he needed to change shoes. He took one of the tennis shoes and one of the lighter pair of shoes and tossed them both to the man who had asked the question. Believe me, there was not much difference in the weight of the shoes, but just enough, he said, to cause him to lose the race.

In the Christian life there are a lot of things that are not wrong in and of themselves, but Christians should not be carrying those weights around. Why? Because you won't win the race. I'm going to use an illustration, but please don't think I am picking on this one particular thing, because I am not. You must determine for yourself what you can do as a child of God, and I must determine that for myself. But one young lady went to her pastor and asked, "Is it all right to dance?" Her pastor replied, "Sure it is, if you don't want to win." The point is that it is not a question of right and wrong for a Christian in his

conduct -- it is taken for granted that you are going to do what is right. The question is: Will it hurt my testimony? Will this keep me from winning the race? Will this be a weight in my life? There are many Christians today who are carrying around a weight they ought not to be carrying around. Don't ask me to argue with you about whether dancing is wrong. I won't argue about any of those things which separationists say you cannot do if you are Christian. I don't say you can't do it. All I'm saying is: Are you in a race? Do you want to win? Are you looking to Jesus? That becomes the important thing.

"And the sin which doth so easily beset us." What is "the sin"? This is not just sin in general; it is the sin. Again, we are cast back into the previous chapter by the wherefore which opened this chapter. What was the great sin in the last chapter? It was unbelief. Unbelief is the sin, and there is nothing which will hold you back as unbelief will. It is just like trying to run a race with the weight of a sack of wheat on your shoulder and your feet stuck inside an empty sack! You'll never be able to do it, and you cannot do it in the Christian life either. Unbelief is what holds many of us back, and if I may make a personal confession, I am confident that it has held me back more than anything else in my Christian life.

### **Believers Are Now In Contest And Conflict (12:3-14)**

For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds [[Heb. 12:3](#)].

The words patience (in [v. 1](#)) and endured (in [v. 2](#)) are from the same root. Trouble generally produces patience and endurance.

These Hebrew believers had come out of a religion that had a tremendous ritual and a great temple. The temple of Herod, although it was not completed even at the time it was destroyed in A.D. 70, was a thing of beauty and actually awe inspiring. Also there was a great ritual that went with it. It had been a God-given religion at the beginning, but it had been debauched and prostituted by the time this Hebrew epistle was written. Nevertheless, as far as religion was concerned, they had it. Now these believers had given up all of that; they no longer were going through all that religious ritual. They had now come to consider Him, that is, Christ, and He was everything. He was the temple. He was the ritual. He was Christianity. He was all of it. There was this simplicity in Christ, and the writer now calls them to consider Him.

They are to know what He endured when He was down here and how He learned patience. We are told in the beginning of this epistle, in the section which presented His humanity, that He learned a great many things down here although He was and is God. In the flesh He learned something which God had to experience by taking on our humanity and suffering for us. He endured and He learned patience.

"Lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." May I say this to you very candidly: unless you stay close to the Word of God where the Holy Spirit can take the things of Christ and make them real to you, you are going to get weary of the Christian life, and you are going to faint in your minds. This is the reason there are so many discouraged Christians around today. My friend, if you come to the Word of God and get close to Jesus Christ, you are going to be encouraged. You will not grow weary of this life down here. Oh, my friend, we are living in the greatest days that have ever been!



Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin [[Heb. 12:4](#)].

This simply indicates that at this time the temple was not yet destroyed. The persecution from the Gentiles of the Roman Empire which was going to come had not yet broken upon these believers. "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood."

He is saying to them, "Although you are having a very difficult time and you are having your problems and troubles, the only cure for your weakness, your weariness, your faltering, your failing, your stumbling, and your discouragement is to consider Him. Consider Christ."

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,  
Look full in His wonderful face;  
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim.  
In the light of His glory and grace.  
"Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus"  
-- Helen H. Lemmel

And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him [[Heb. 12:5](#)].

The writer is quoting here from [Proverbs 3:11-12](#) -- "My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth."

Their only resource was Christ -- not a temple, or a ritual, or a religion. They were almost outcasts at this time, and the writer is telling them not to forget this exhortation from God to His children.

The word children is used in the Authorized Version, but in the Greek son and sons are used six times in [verses 5-8](#). The Greek word for "son" is huiois, and it means "full-grown son." Now there are a great many saints today who do not think they need to be disciplined, but discipline is for mature saints, people who have been walking with the Lord for a long time. There was a time when I had come to the place where I thought I didn't need to be disciplined anymore. I thought I had come a long ways. But the Lord put me flat on my back physically to let me know that there was some more disciplining to be done.

The word chastening means something a little different from what we think today. We think that chastening is punishment. The Greek word is paideuo, and it means "child training or discipline." You see, the Lord disciplines His own children.

For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons [[Heb. 12:6-8](#)].

The question is sometimes asked, and it is a very pertinent question: Why do the righteous suffer? When illness confined me to my home and I spent most of my time flat on my back for about a month, I had a great deal of time to study, and I want to pass on to you what the Lord has shown me through my own experience.

Let's put this down as an axiom of Scripture: God's children do suffer. The Bible doesn't argue about that -- the Bible just says that it is true. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all" ([Ps. 34:19](#)). In the Book of Job we read, "Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward" ([Job 5:7](#)). The Lord Jesus said, "... In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" ([John 16:33](#)). And even Paul said, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" ([2Tim. 3:12](#)).

Why do God's people suffer? There is no pat answer to that. No one little verse of Scripture answers it. I have gone through the Scriptures and listed seven reasons why God's children suffer. I would like to share them with you:

1. The first reason that we suffer as God's children (and even as His mature sons) is because of our own stupidity and our own sin. [1Peter 2:20](#) reads, "For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently. . . ." The word faults refers to a sin where you missed the mark -- you just didn't quite make it. "For what glory is it, if . . . ye shall take it patiently?" Peter says there is no value in the suffering which was caused by our own foolishness.

How many of you years ago invested some of your savings in a wildcat oil well in Texas? I was a pastor in Texas for many years, and I can tell you about a whole lot of folk who own dry oil wells. I know of one man in particular whose family is practically in poverty today because of such an investment. He has suffered because he played the fool.

I know another man who came to me in Los Angeles, and said, "Dr. McGee, I have certainly played the fool. My wife and I haven't been getting along too well recently. I had to work late one evening and called my wife and told her so. There is a very attractive woman in my office who has been very sympathetic toward me, and she had to work late also. All of a sudden it occurred to me that it would be nice to have dinner together. We didn't do anything but go out to dinner, and it was a friendly sort of dinner. But the wrong person was in that restaurant and saw us. He called my wife and told her. It never went any further than that, but it could have turned into a really bad thing. I played the fool." You know, a lot of saints suffer because of stupidity.

2. The second reason we suffer is for taking a stand for truth and righteousness. I can guarantee that if you take a stand for truth and righteousness, you are going to suffer. How many men and women could testify to that? Peter says, "But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled" ([1Pet. 3:14](#)). Many people deliberately take a stand for God, and they have suffered for it.

However, we can be foolish and misguided in our thinking concerning this. One man came to me and told me that where he worked everybody was his enemy because he had stood up for God. Well, another Christian man who was an official in that same concern told me that this man was trying to lecture everybody -- even during work hours! He was

making an absolute nuisance of himself by attempting to witness to people while they were busy on their jobs. You see, he wasn't really suffering because he took a stand for truth and righteousness.

3. We suffer for sin in our lives. Paul says, "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" ([1Cor. 11:31](#)). However, if we are God's children and refuse to deal with the sin in our lives, God will deal with it. He will judge us.

4. The fourth reason we suffer is for our past sins. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" ([Gal. 6:7](#)). One time when I was a pastor in Nashville, Tennessee, we had Mel Trotter, the great evangelist and converted drunkard, for a series of meetings. One night after the service we all went to a place called Candyland. The rest of us got big sodas or malts, but he got a little glass of soda water. The others began to kid him about it, and he made this statement, "When the Lord gave me a new heart, He didn't give me a new stomach." Liquor had ruined his stomach, and he was still suffering because of that.

5. The fifth reason God's children suffer is for some lofty purpose of God which He does not always reveal to the believer. We see this in the Book of Job. Job suffered because he was demonstrating to Satan and the demon world and to the angels of heaven that he was not a timeserver, that every man does not have his price and that he loved God for Himself alone. I hope I never have to suffer as Job did.

6. The sixth reason Christians suffer is for their faith, as we saw in chapter 11 of this epistle. Some demonstrated their faith, and great victories were won. Some were delivered by the sword; some were slain by the sword. I think of the French Huguenots who went into battle, knowing they would all be slain. Yet they went into battle saying, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" You see, they suffered for their faith.

7. The seventh and last reason God's children suffer is for discipline. That is what we have here in [verse 6](#): "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." This means child training or discipline, not punishment. Punishment is to uphold the law. A judge punishes, but a father chastens and he does it in love. God uses chastening to demonstrate His love for us. And the writer makes it very clear that you are an illegitimate child if you are not chastened by the Lord, my friend. Many people say, "Oh, why did God let this happen to me? I must not be a Christian." The fact is that your suffering is the proof that you are a child of God.

I think that if you are an intelligent Christian, when you are in trouble and do not know why, you will go to the Lord and talk to Him about it. I am sure that He will get the message to you and let you know why you are in trouble. The reason may not be that He is judging you. God does judge us, and that is punishment, but He is also our loving, heavenly Father who disciplines His children.

When I was a boy I, with several other boys at school, got into trouble. My dad came down to the school where there were several hundred children, but when he walked across that schoolyard, do you know who he was after? He was after his son, and he took his son home and disciplined him. He didn't discipline those hundreds of other children -- because they weren't his. He disciplined only his boy, the boy whom he loved. My dad

died when I was fourteen, and now I have a heavenly Father who does the same thing -- He disciplines me in love.

Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us,  
and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in  
subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? [[Heb. 12:9](#)].

Believe me, I listened to my dad. I hadn't heard about the new psychology in which you don't pay any attention to your parents, and your parents aren't supposed to discipline you. My dad disciplined, and I listened to him. The writer says that if we listen to our earthly parents, "shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?" Whether or not you listen to your earthly father, you had better listen to your heavenly Father.

The writer to the Hebrews goes on to make a suggestion. He says, "Be in subjection to the father of spirits, and live." Does he mean live it up? I think he means to live a Christian life in all its fullness -- that's the positive side. But I think there is also a negative aspect, which is that the heavenly Father disciplines in very severe ways sometimes, and there is a sin unto death. The sin unto death is a sin that a child of God can commit, and sometimes the heavenly Father will take a disobedient child out of this world because he is disgracing Him. The writer is saying that you had better listen to your heavenly Father because He is disciplining you in love, but if you persist in going on in sin, He may take you home.

For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own  
pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his  
holiness [[Heb. 12:10](#)].

Sometimes I think my earthly dad got a little angry with me and vented his anger on me - but even then he did it for my profit, I'm sure. My heavenly Father disciplines me for my profit also -- there is no doubt about that!

"That we might be partakers of his holiness." I believe that there is no way you can become a full-grown child of God living in fellowship with Him (that is the main thought behind "holiness") except through the discipline of God.

Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but  
grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of  
righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby [[Heb. 12:11](#)].

This is like the boy whose father said to him before he whipped him, "Son, this is going to hurt me more than it hurts you." The boy said, "Yes, Dad, but not in the same place." God chastens His children. He does not get any particular joy out of it, but He does it because you and I need it. Not only does chastening not seem to be joyous, it isn't joyous, but grievous -- that is our experience.

Although no chastening at the time is fun, "afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." God does not discipline you without purpose.

I am reminded of the story of the man who lived in a home for the mentally ill. There was a visitor one day who saw the man beating himself on the head with a baseball bat. The visitor went up to him and said, "Why in the world are you hitting yourself on the head with the baseball bat?" The man replied, "It feels so good when I quit!" God does not discipline you just to make you feel good when it is over. He doesn't give you ill health just so you will appreciate good health when it returns. There is always a purpose in the discipline of God for you.

Now what is your reaction when God disciplines you? There are four reactions we can have to God's discipline that are mentioned in this chapter. I want us to take a look at each of them:

1. "And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord . . ." ([v. 5](#)). The first reaction is that you can despise the chastening. You can treat it lightly and accept no message from it at all. You simply become a fatalist and say, "Well, I'm having trouble. Everybody has trouble." You do not recognize the fact that your heavenly Father is disciplining you, and you do not get His message in it at all.
2. ". . . nor faint when thou art rebuked of him" ([v. 5](#)). There are those who respond in this way (I would call it the crybaby reaction): They begin to cry and say, "Why did this happen to me? It is not worth living a Christian life. I have served the Lord, and now He's letting this happen to me." In other words, they just faint away. Many saints take that attitude. However, when I was going through a serious illness several years ago, I received several thousand letters from people all over this country and throughout the world. Many of those people were suffering much more than I, and their attitude made me feel ashamed of myself. They had been on beds of pain for months -- several of them for years -- and they wrote the sweetest letters I have ever read. Those letters came from folk who had real victory. We hear of meetings where people are healed and where they talk of great victories. Well, to be very frank with you, if you want to know where the great victories are being won today, go to the hospitals or visit some dear shut-in saints who have been in bed for months, and listen to them talk. You can faint, but these saints don't faint because the Lord is strengthening them.
3. "If ye endure chastening . . ." ([v. 7](#)). This is a dangerous response to have because it is so close to that which is true, but this is the response of the super-duper pious saints. To me they are like the Indian fakir who crawls up on a board filled with nails and lies down. He doesn't have to lie down there, but he does it. There are a lot of saints who accept the discipline of the Lord in a passive way: "Oh, this is of the Lord, and I will endure it." God never asks you to take that pessimistic, super pious attitude. If you are in trouble, why don't you go and ask Him, "Lord, why did You send this to me? There is a lesson here, and I want to learn it." Don't accept it in a passive manner, simply enduring it but complaining all the time.
4. "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" ([v. 11](#)). Have you ever done sitting-up exercises? Once I became acquainted with a man who jogged around the golf course where I played golf. He was inclined to be

a little chubby, so he exercised in order to lose weight. Are you exercised when you get into trouble? When you have to suffer? When an enemy comes across your pathway? Stop and ask God, "Why in the world did You let that fellow come across my pathway?" You know, God does it for a purpose. God does all these things for a purpose, and we need to be exercised by them. The apostle Paul said, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" ([1Cor. 9:27](#)). Paul exercised himself -- that is, he didn't give in to the desires of his body -- because he did not want to come before God's presence some day and be disapproved. My friend, whoever you are or wherever you are, it is time to take your sitting-up exercises.

I would like to give this word of personal testimony. A number of years ago when I had cancer, my first question to the Lord was, "Why?" It didn't take me long to discover that it was my heavenly Father punishing me -- I understood that. I was a hardheaded child of God, but I got things squared away with Him. He healed me of the cancer and richly blessed the growth of our radio broadcast ministry. Then suddenly I was knocked down with another illness. The doctor told me to stay on my back, and I did so for three weeks or more. I learned something during that time which I would like to pass on to you. God wasn't judging me this time, because I've learned to keep my account short with Him. I get things straightened out with Him about every day. I do fail Him -- I guess I'm still as hardheaded as I ever was -- but I go to Him and confess my sin. I believe I am in the will of God. So I went to Him that second time and cried, "Lord, why in the world did You let this happen to me? I want to go on with the radio ministry." He put me flat on my back, and He said, "You are My son, and I am your Father. There are a lot of things you haven't learned yet. You may have the notion that your radio ministry is essential and that I can't get along without you, but how did I get along without you before you got here? You are going to lie here and learn something. I am your Father, and you need to learn to endure for Me. You do not know how to rest, and you do not know how to wait on Me." It took me a while, but I finally said to Him, "All right, Father, if You want me to lie here, I'll lie here. I want to learn the lesson You have for me."

We need to be exercised by the Lord's discipline, and then we will not find ourselves in the position described in the following verse --

Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees  
[\[Heb. 12:12\]](#).

Don't go through life as a Christian, complaining all the time. I used to have a friend who, when I asked how he felt, always told me how he felt -- he took fifteen minutes to tell me how he felt, and he never felt good. Therefore I quit asking how he felt. He was going around all the time with his hands hanging down and with feeble knees. May I say to you, someone is watching you. How do you endure the trouble that comes from God? Do you endure it by being exercised by it? Do you say to yourself, It is my Father, and He is chastening me. There is a purpose in it and a lesson I want to learn. We should start our sitting-up exercises: "One, two, three. One, two, three. Lord, I'd like to know why I am suffering this way."

And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be  
turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed [\[Heb. 12:13\]](#).



I'll be very honest with you and admit that I have never clearly understood what the writer meant when he said, "Make straight paths for your feet." Are we to walk the straight path so that the weak saints might follow in our footsteps? Or, are we to walk the straight path so that we don't get in the habit of limping through life? There are a lot of lamebrained Christians today who complain and criticize and are not witnesses for God at all -- and yet they appear very super pious.

Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord [[Heb. 12:14](#)].

Be encouraged and be at peace with all men; that is, with all who will let you be at peace with them. There are some people who just won't be at peace. Follow peace with all men -- with all Christian men. We should make this one big cross-country race where there are a lot of us running the Christian life together.

"And holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." If that means that I have to produce holiness, then I am going to give up, because I haven't any holiness. But, oh, the peace that I have which came through the blood of Christ! "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" ([Rom. 5:1](#)). If I have any holiness, it is because Christ has been made unto me righteousness -- He is my righteousness. If I get into the presence of God it will be because Christ died for me. That is encouraging, my friend. It makes me want to get out and run the Christian race.

### **Danger Signal: The Peril Of Denying (12:15-29)**

Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled [[Heb. 12:15](#)].

"Looking diligently" has in it the thought of direction. And what is that direction?

"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith . . ." ([Heb. 12:2](#)).

"Lest any man fail of the grace of God." The word here for "fail" is not apostasy -- this is not speaking of the danger of apostatizing. It means simply to fall back. In other words, a believer must keep his eyes on the Lord Jesus, not on men. If he doesn't keep his eyes on Him, he is apt to get to the place where he does not avail himself of the grace of God.

Now God has a tremendous reservoir of grace, and He wants to lavish it upon His children. He is prepared to do that, and He is able to do that. Christ paid the penalty for our sins, and God is rich in mercy, rich in grace, and He wants to expend it upon us. The problem is that many of us do not avail ourselves of His grace. But you see, we are talking here about reality -- something that you can go to God for and lay hold of it. That is the glory of it all, and that is the message of this epistle. Have you gone to Him today, my Christian friend? Have you talked to Him -- yes, reverently, but really talked to Him like He is your Father? Tell Him about yourself. Tell Him you need grace. We all need grace and it is available, but we've got to apply for it. We need to ask Him for it. Do not fail of the grace of God.

"Lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." One critical, ugly saint in a church can stir up more trouble than you can possibly imagine,

just like one rotten apple in a barrel spoils all the others. We need to ask God for grace to endure whatever we are going through, and not become bitter toward any one or toward any circumstances.

Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright [[Heb. 12:16](#)].

Fornication here is spiritual fornication. There is the danger of turning from God to the things of the flesh, and it could be most anything of the flesh. As far as Esau was concerned, it was the selling of his birthright, a spiritual birthright that entailed so much. It meant that Esau would be in the line that led to the Messiah, and it meant that he should be the priest of the family of Abraham. But he didn't care for it; he was not interested in spiritual blessings.

"Profane person" does not mean that Esau cursed a great deal. It has no reference to that at all. The word profane comes from two Latin words: pro, meaning either "before" or "against," and fanum, meaning "temple." Therefore, it means against the temple or against God. It means that Esau was just a godless fellow. He saw no need of any recognition of God, or of any relationship to Him, or of any responsibility toward Him. So he despised his birthright and counted it as something of no value. He was even willing to trade it in for a bowl of food! There is many a man who has sold his soul. Some have sold it for liquor, some for drugs, some for sex, and some for dishonesty. There is a danger for the child of God to turn from God to the things of the flesh. We will either go forward in our relationship with Christ or fall back -- we won't stay in the same place.

For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears [[Heb. 12:17](#)].

Few passages have been as misunderstood as has this passage of Scripture. It gives the impression that poor Esau wanted to repent and God wouldn't accept his repentance. However, the writer is saying something altogether different from that. Esau despised his birthright and then found out later that there was also an inheritance attached to it -- he would inherit twice as much as any other son of Isaac. The point is that Esau was interested in that which was physical. When it says, "he sought it carefully with tears," it means that he did a great deal of boohooing. He was like the thief who began to weep when he was caught and to say he was sorry. But he wasn't sorry he was a thief; he was sorry that he'd been caught. Likewise, Esau was not repenting because he wanted to turn to God and receive His spiritual blessing. He repented because he had missed out on something material. He was actually against God.

For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest,

And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more:

(For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart:

And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:) [[Heb. 12:18-21](#)].

The writer is speaking here of the giving of the Law to Moses on top of Mount Sinai, and he is speaking of the old covenant. The people to whom he was writing were Hebrews who had turned to Christ. We need to keep that in mind all the time in this epistle. We must remember that the early church -- the three thousand who were saved on the Day of Pentecost -- were not Gentiles but were Jews. Until Paul and Barnabas and the other missionaries began to move out, the early church for those first few years was 100 percent Jewish.

Now these Jews in Jerusalem who had turned to Christ find themselves at a great loss. They had been accustomed to going to the temple. They had been accustomed to hearing the Mosaic Law read. But now they are shut away from the Law, and now they are shut out from the temple. They are no longer a part of the system at all, and they feel very much on the outside. Therefore, I think the writer is saying to them. "You come now to a mount that is different from Mount Sinai, and you do not want to go back to that." Mount Sinai was the place where the Law was given and three thousand people were slain (see [Exod. 32](#)), but three thousand people were saved on the Day of Pentecost. There was death at the giving of the Law; there was new life when the gospel was preached on the Day of Pentecost. The giving of the Law was by no means a delightful experience. There were thunder and lightning, earthquake and storm, blazing fire and the blast of a trumpet that grew louder and louder and louder. It was a terrifying experience -- so much so that the people said to Moses, "Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die" ([Exod. 20:19](#)). Now the writer to the Hebrews says, "You don't want to go back to that system. We have left all that behind us."

When I was a pastor in Nashville, Tennessee, there was a lady in my church who was a very lovely person, but I always felt that she was one of those Paul spoke of when he said, ". . . Silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" ([2Tim. 3:6-7](#)). She was a woman who was sort of a social hanger-on. She belonged to a very wealthy family, went to their cocktail parties, and engaged in their sins, but she still wanted to go to the Bible classes. She attended my church but never became a member. And she pretended to be quite a Bible student. She said to me one day after I had preached a sermon about the Law. "Dr. McGee, the giving of the Law is so beautiful, isn't it?" I had to say to that dear lady, "The giving of the Law is not beautiful. I think it is one of the most frightening scenes in the Bible! And it was a law that these people were told would never be able to save them. God gave them a sacrificial system whereby they could bring a sacrifice. A little animal had to die because the Law couldn't save them. The Law actually condemned them."

These Hebrew Christians had been accustomed to going to the temple and going through that ritual. Now there was nothing for them to go to, no ceremony, and no sacrifice to bring. So the writer tells them that they really do have something --

But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the loving God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels [[Heb. 12:22](#)].

Remember that he is speaking to Hebrews. Mount Zion was David's place in Jerusalem. His palace was located there, and he was buried up there. Zion was David's favorite spot. Many of the Jewish believers had still been going up to the feast in Jerusalem, but the persecution had broken out, and Christians had been driven out of Jerusalem. So he assures them they have a Jerusalem in heaven. Mount Zion is the heavenly city, the eternal city of the living God. The Book of Revelation calls it the New Jerusalem. I cannot give you the number or the street name, but my future address is in the New Jerusalem. This is what we have come to by God's grace. We have something far better in Christ than the Jews ever had under the Law.

"And to an innumerable company of angels." I have made the statement -- and I will stick to it -- that angel ministry is not connected with the church. But we are going into the New Jerusalem some day, and the Book of Revelation shows us a huge worship scene there, a great scene which John saw and tells us about. John said in effect, "There is a company of created intelligences there, ten thousand times ten thousand of them." And then he looked around and said, "My, I didn't see that other crowd out there -- there are more than any man can number." They are God's created intelligences called angels.

I have never seen an angel, but I've often wondered about them. I am going to come some day to the New Jerusalem and join with you in that great worship of the Lamb, and all these created intelligences will be there. One thing I want to do is just to talk to some of them. Wouldn't you like to talk to them? I've never had the privilege. Whenever I meet someone who tells me they have had a dream or a vision and an angel spoke to them, I tell them they ought to think back to what they had for supper the night before -- that may explain the presence of an angel! You haven't seen an angel my friend; you may think you have, but you haven't. Yet the time will come when we will go to the place where they are.

To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect [[Heb. 12:23](#)].

"The firstborn" does not refer to Christ here, although He is called that elsewhere in Scripture. The writer is speaking of the ones who have been born again. They are the only ones who are going to be there. This is the church of firstborn ones, those who at the Rapture will be caught up to this place.

Their names "which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all." I thank God that when I get into the presence of "the Judge of all," there is one who will already have paid the penalty for my sins, and my record will be clear.

"And to the spirits of just men made perfect." "Perfect" does not mean complete or perfect as you and I think of it. It refers to Old Testament saints whose salvation has been made complete now that Christ has died as the Lamb of God who took away the sin of the world.

And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel [[Heb. 12:24](#)].

"And to Jesus" -- then we are going to be brought into the presence of Jesus.

"The mediator of the new covenant." He is the mediator of the new covenant -- He is not going to thunder from Mount Sinai. Even when He was here, He sat down on a mountain and gave the law for His kingdom. I think it is going to be lots sweeter when we come into His presence some day and see Him as the mediator of the new covenant.

"And to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." Abel's blood cried for vengeance, but the blood of Christ speaks of salvation. This is wonderful.

Back in [verse 3](#) we read, "Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself. . . ." The writer is trying to get these Hebrew Christians to take their eyes off the temple, off a bloody sacrifice, off a ritual, and on to the person of Christ. Today we need to get our eyes off a church, off religion, off an organization, and off a man. No man down here should be the one to whom we are looking. Look to Jesus -- look only to Him. The temple with all its splendor and ritual was passing away and was to be destroyed -- now they are under a new economy.

Consider Him. Look to Jesus. Someone has said that this is the simplicity of our faith, and I agree with that, but there is a danger of oversimplification under the evangelistic methods which are being used today. I have a little book which I have entitled Faith Plus Nothing Equals Salvation because I believe this is true. Faith alone can save. However, today we have an epidemic of easy believism. Many folk have made salvation a simple mathematical equation: If you can say yes to this, yes to that, and yes to a half-dozen questions, then you are a Christian. This type of approach leaves no room for the work of the Holy Spirit and for the conviction of sin. It just means a nodding assent, a passing acquaintance with Jesus. It does not mean that you are born again.

There is a word that is being overworked today: commit your life to Christ. What kind of life do you have to commit to Christ? If you are coming to Christ as a sinner, you don't have any life -- you are dead in trespasses and sins. The Lord Jesus is the one who said, "I have come that you might have life." You do not commit a life, but He committed His life for you and He died for you. You are dead in trespasses and sins, and He has life to offer to you: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" ([John 10:10](#)).

We also hear people say, "Give your heart to Jesus." Well, my friend, what do you think He wants with that dirty, old heart? Read the list of things He said come out of the heart (see [Matt. 15:19](#)). They are the dirtiest things that I know. He didn't ask you to give your heart to Him. He says, "I want to give you a new heart and a new life." We need today the conviction of sin, to know that we are sinners. We have made salvation a very jolly affair. An evangelistic crusade today is just too ducky; it's so sweet, and it's so lovely. I don't see people come weeping under conviction of sin.

See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we

escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven [[Heb. 12:25](#)].

"See that ye refuse not him that speaketh." Since the Lord Jesus Christ is so wonderful and since His words are very important, it pays you to give attention to Him -- it will be very profitable to you.

"For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven." If you want to see what happened to a people under the Law, go to the nation of Israel even today. They are not dwelling in peace. Theirs has been a really sad story for over nineteen hundred years. Why? Because they refused to hear Him. They also refused to hear the Law, and for that God judged them. It is a serious business not to listen to this warning. Jesus said, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" ([John 7:17](#)). If you do His will you will find out whether it is true or not, but if you refuse -- how will you escape if you neglect so great a salvation?

Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven [[Heb. 12:26](#)].

At the giving of the Law there was an earthquake, and at the crucifixion of Christ there was an earthquake. Now God is saying that the day is coming when He is going to shake everything. When I look at the tall buildings in downtown Los Angeles, I am tempted to say to them, "I want to get a good look at you today because you may not be here tomorrow." God says He is going to shake the earth and heaven itself. Do you know why He is going to do that? God is going to shake everything to let all His created universe know that there are some things which are unshakeable, and one of those things is living faith in Jesus Christ. He is the Rock that we rest upon, and He cannot be shaken. Do you want a secure place today? He is the place to go. He is the air raid shelter that is safe today. Men want to make the world safe, but no man can make this world safe, nor can any world organization such as the United Nations make it safe. It is not even safe for me to walk at night down the street on which I live. However, God is going to make it safe some day, and in order to do that, He is first going to shake everything.

And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain [[Heb. 12:27](#)].

In other words, we had better be very careful that we build our lives on the right foundation. Are we building on sinking sand? Or are we building upon the Rock which is Christ?

"That those things which cannot be shaken may remain." God will remain. His word will remain, and the eternal kingdom to which believers belong will remain.

Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear [[Heb. 12:28](#)].



As believers we are moving toward a heavenly kingdom, but as we move toward the heavenly kingdom we need to recognize that we should be serving God down here. But how are we to serve Him? Well, we are to serve Him "acceptably." How do we serve Him acceptably? "With reverence and godly fear." My friend, Christianity is not playing church, and it is not assuming a pious attitude. It is a living, vital, and real relationship with Jesus Christ that transforms your life and anchors you in the Word of God.

For our God is a consuming fire [[Heb. 12:29](#)].

You can take that or leave it, but it just happens to be in the Word of God. This is a solemn reminder that grace is available for you to serve God, but don't trifle with God, my friend. Don't think you can play fast and loose with God and get by with it.

I remember that when I first came to Pasadena as a pastor in 1940 I was asked by a lady to go see her husband. They were a lovely couple, but the husband was sick and in bed at home. In fact, he never got out of that bed; he died there. When I went to see him, I presented the gospel to him. He heard me courteously and then said this, "Dr. McGee, I would like to tell you right now that I accept Christ as my Savior, and I will do that, but I have trifled and played with God so often down through the years that I don't even know myself when I'm sincere and when I'm not sincere."

My friend, don't trifle with God. That day may come when you won't even know where you stand with Him at all. I tell you, our God is a consuming fire, but he is also a gracious, glorious, wonderful Savior.

## Chapter 13

**THEME:** Love

As we have said, chapter 11 is the faith chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews; chapter 12 is the hope chapter; and chapter 13 is the love chapter. Another outline that has been suggested for this section is as follows: chapter 10 the Christian's privilege; chapter 11 the Christian's power; chapter 12 the Christian's progress; and chapter 13 the Christian's practice. That is not the best outline, but it is good for chapter 13 -- in chapter 13 we will see the Christian's practice.

### **Secret Life Of The Believer (13:1-6)**

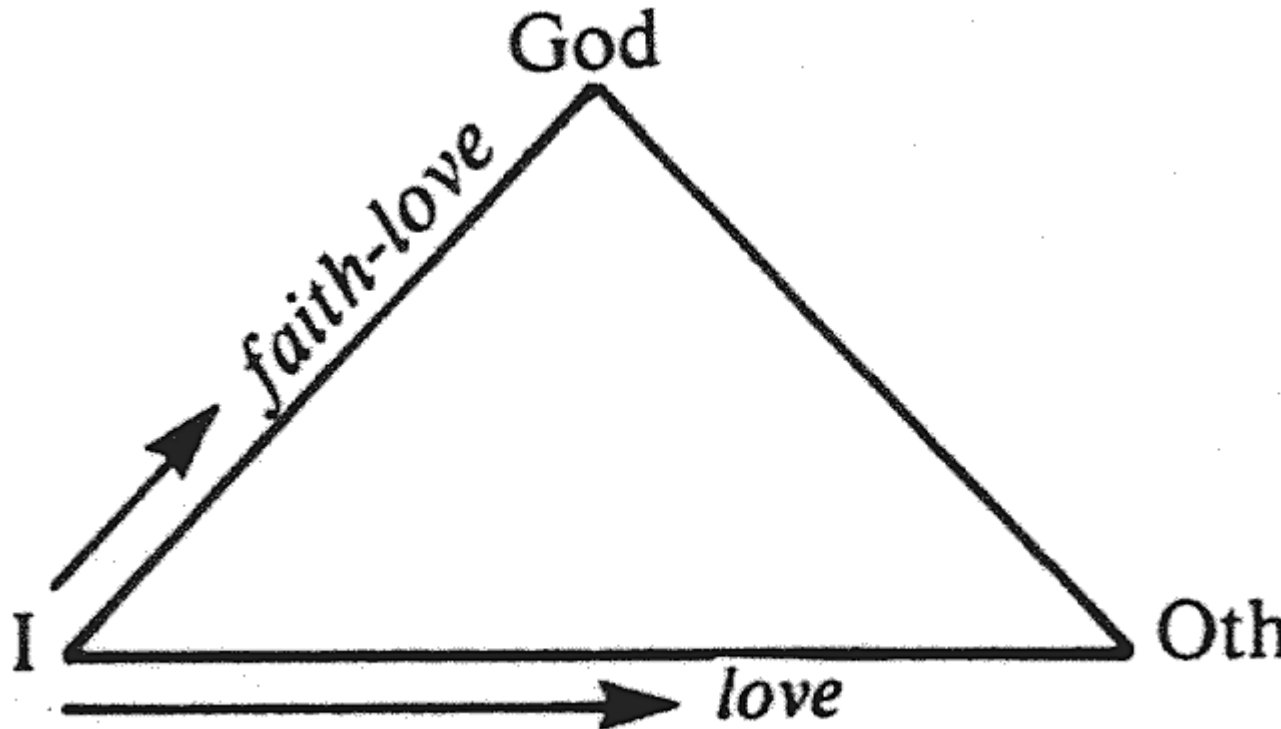
Let brotherly love continue [[Heb. 13:1](#)].

"Brotherly love" should be translated as brother love. The writer of this epistle is writing primarily to Hebrews, but what he has to say has application to us. Both Jew and Gentile have been brought into one body, the body of believers. The cement, the Elmer's glue, that holds us together is brother love -- not brotherly love, but brother love. We are not to love like brothers, but we are to love because we are brothers.

Now if you are a child of God you are my brother. I get many letters that say, "I am a black person. But I listen to your program and I want you to know that I am a believer and I love you." I appreciate that so much. What difference does the color of the skin make when we are children of God? When He has given us new hearts and washed us

white as snow, we are brothers, we are in the family of God, and we are to love one another.

I like to illustrate the Christian life as a triangle:



Picture: The Christian Life As A Triangle - 1

The Christian life is a life of faith and of love toward God and of love toward others. "Let brother love continue."

Now here is stranger love --

Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares [[Heb. 13:2](#)].

"Some have entertained angels unawares." The word angel may refer to superhuman beings or it may refer to human beings who are messengers from God. The same word is used to address the leaders of the seven churches of Asia Minor in chapters 2 and 3 of the Book of Revelation, in which I take the position that the "angels" are human messengers; that is, they are the teachers or leaders of the churches being addressed.

The writer mentions that there are those in the Old Testament who "entertained angels unawares." Abraham was one of them, and Jacob was another (although he didn't do much entertaining that night as he was too busy wrestling!); Joshua also entertained an angel.

The basic thought of this verse in the Hebrew epistle is that we are to extend love to strangers by showing hospitality to them. We ought to be careful that our love is exercised with judgment, but we need to recognize that there are folk around us to whom we could be very helpful. We should extend our love to them, and in doing this we might meet some very wonderful people.

Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body [[Heb. 13:3](#)].

Paul himself was in bonds. He knew a great deal about that, and so he says, "Remember the needy and those in trouble. Show love to those who are in need." You see, the church is a body -- when one member suffers, all of us suffer. When I was seriously ill sometime ago I had the opportunity to experience this myself. A letter from one dear lady caused me to shed tears: "Dr. McGee, I'm inactive now, and I'm not able to do anything. I prayed to God that I would be able to take your disease upon myself so that you could go on with your ministry." May I say to you, we don't find that kind of spirit in every church or every group of believers, but we need it and I thank God there is a lot of it around.

We talk a great deal about the Christian fellowship which we have in our little group meetings or around the banquet table. But what about the poor saint who is off yonder lying on a bed and whom no one has visited? Many of you could have a wonderful ministry visiting the sick and lonely. This is the brother love that he is talking about here. Brother love is not something that takes place only in the church or in little groups that meet together. There has been a new phrase coined in our day: "body truth." Gracious, that truth has been in Scripture all these years; it is not something new. And you exercise that body truth by going out there to that individual who is in need. We do not hear that aspect emphasized very much today.

Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge [[Heb. 13:4](#)].

"Marriage is honourable in all." The writer is condemning asceticism here. Young man, if you find a Christian girl who will have you, get married. Young lady, if you find a Christian fellow who will have you, get married. I believe that God will lead you to the right one, if you are willing to be led in that way.

Marriage is honorable in all, and sex is to be exercised within the framework of marriage. God gave marriage to mankind for the welfare of mankind. I know I sound like a square, because this idea of living together without being married has become very commonplace, but I must tell you, young person, that you will surely pay for it if you attempt to live together outside the bonds of marriage. The home is the very center of the whole social structure, and it is the very center of the church.

"And the bed undefiled." There is nothing wrong with sex -- except that it is being taught too much in our schools today. When I was in London sometime ago, I learned that they were going to cut down on teaching sex. They found that it led to more rapes in the schools than ever before, and they felt it to be responsible for an epidemic of venereal disease.

"But whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" ([Gal. 6:7](#)). This is very severe, but after years in the ministry, I have watched many Christians who have tried to get by with sexual sins, and I do not know of any who have been able to do it. Maybe they have not been detected, but they have not gotten by with it; God has judged them.

Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee [[Heb. 13:5](#)].

"Your conversation" means your manner of life. Don't be known as a moneygrabber, as one who puts the almighty dollar above almighty God. He may not make you a millionaire, but He will never leave you or forsake you. Isn't it wonderful to have Him say that to you? It does not matter who you are or what you do, if you have responded in faith to the Word of God, you have been brought to the place where you can know that He will never leave you or forsake you. I have a notion that I have friends today who would forsake me, and I may have relatives who would forsake me. But the Lord Jesus will never forsake me. I hope you have Him on your side.

So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me [[Heb. 13:6](#)].

The Hebrew Christians in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria were going to face punishment and trials in the next few years. They needed to remember that God was not going to forsake them, and that they could say in spite of what happened, "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."

It is interesting to note what happened when some of the prisoners of war finally were able to return home after the war in Vietnam. During the war, many radicals in the United States were concerned over the fate of the POWs, and they made trips to Vietnam and led protest rallies on their behalf. But when the POWs were released, very few of the radicals showed any interest in them. When the prisoners of war came back to this country many of them testified that they had turned to Jesus, and it was Jesus who helped them. Of course, the news media didn't like that or want to talk about that. But Jesus never forsook them -- He stayed with them and saw them through. He is the one who will see you through, too. I don't think the radicals or the politicians will help you much. I am tired of listening to them. I want to listen to Jesus, because He will never leave me nor forsake me.

### **Social Life Of The Believer (13:7-14)**

Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation [[Heb. 13:7](#)].

There are some ministers who use this verse and say that the members of their church are to obey them. However, it seems rather that the thought here is of leadership. He is speaking of spiritual leaders, and spiritual leaders are to lead folk to Christ. If a man is presenting Christ and is attempting to bring people into the presence of Christ, then that is a man to whom you should be loyal. But to be loyal to a man simply because he is the pastor of a church is not what Paul is talking about at all.

Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever [[Heb. 13:8](#)].

"Jesus Christ." There is no accident in the Word of God; that is, no word is ever used carelessly. Jesus is His human name; Christ is His title, that which speaks of His deity.

Jesus is the name which links Him with mankind. It identifies Him as the most wonderful person in this world.

Jesus, Name of sweetness,  
Jesus, sound of love;  
Cheering exiles onward  
To their rest above.  
Jesus, oh the magic  
Of the soft love sound;  
How it thrills and trembles  
To creation's bound.  
-- Author unknown

How wonderful Jesus was as a person when He was down here. People crowded around Him because He was so human. The mobs followed Him and they loved Him. It was the teaching of Jesus they hated -- it was not Jesus the man. He was wonderful, my friend.

Christ is a title which speaks of His messianic mission to this earth -- He is God manifest in the flesh, "Jesus Christ" -- how marvelously these two are meshed together here. He is Jesus Christ, and He is the same.

I feel inadequate to deal with this very marvelous verse, but I do want to say that it has probably been misapplied as much as any verse in the Word of God. There are many who use this verse and say, "When Jesus was here nineteen hundred years ago, He performed miracles; therefore we ought to perform them today. He healed nineteen hundred years ago, and so we ought to be healing today. He is still in that same business."

Jesus Christ is the same, but we need to understand how He is the same. He is the same in His character, in His person, and in His attributes, but He is not the same in place or in performance. When I was in the land of Israel I didn't see Him over there. I saw very little evidence at all of Him in that land. Over nineteen hundred years ago He was in Bethlehem as a little baby, but He is no longer a baby and He is not in Bethlehem. Later He was a little boy playing in the streets of Nazareth, but I didn't see Him. I saw a lot of little boys, but He was not one of them. A few years later as a man He walked through that land, and He did heal. I was in Jerusalem and I saw Golgotha, but there is not a cross there and He is not on a cross today. The whole thought of this epistle is that He is now at the right hand of God: ". . . We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens" ([Heb. 8:1](#)); and we are to look "unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith . . ." ([Heb. 12:2](#)). He accomplished our redemption nineteen hundred years ago, and He sat down at the right hand of God. Right now He is up yonder, but some day He will come as the King to the earth to establish His Kingdom. He has not yet called His church out of the world, but some day He will do that. You see, Jesus is not the same in place and performance, but He is the same in His attributes.

When He was here nineteen hundred years ago, He was God who came down to our level. When I have been in the land of Israel and have considered that fact, I have truly marveled at it. He came to a place where there was no great wealth or pomp or ceremony. He did not come to Rome, the center of power and government. He did not come to Athens, the great cultural center. He did come to an insignificant outpost of the Roman Empire, and He came to the level of the common man.

Because we are often afraid that we will be misunderstood when we speak of Christ's humanity, we do not emphasize it as we should. Rather, we emphasize His deity, and we need to do that because the liberal speaks of nothing but His humanity, and even that he does not truly understand. But in His humanity, I think that Jesus was the most attractive person who ever walked this earth -- not because He was God, but because He was a man, a real man.

Have you ever wondered why the crowds were attracted to Him and followed Him? He was strong but gentle -- so gentle that little children came to Him. However, He could drive the money-changers out of the temple and they ran for cover, because He was man enough to put them out. Also He was attractive. He had what we call today charisma. People followed Him because they loved Him, and they knew they were in the presence of a man who was a man. In Capernaum He healed a leper and then had to leave because the crowds pressed around Him, so that He couldn't even continue His ministry. Even publicans and sinners came to Him, which was the thing that so angered the religious crowd. If He came to your town today -- I hate to say this -- I don't think He would come to your church. I have a notion you would find Him where the crowd is; He would be mixing with people and probably holding a child or two. When He went to Jericho at the end of His ministry, again we find that the crowds lined the way so that little Zacchaeus had to climb up a tree in order to see Him, but even there our Lord stopped and brought him down out of the tree. How sensitive the Lord Jesus was to human need, and how wonderful He was in His person!

I want to say something very carefully: it was the person of Christ that appealed; it was not His teachings. His great declaration that He was going to die to redeem men was not popular. At the very beginning of His ministry, it was His teaching that offended. He taught that He was the Bread of Life and that He had come to give His life that men might have spiritual food, and added, "Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father." And John's record tells us, "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life" ([John 6:65-68](#)). The crowd narrowed down, and only twelve stayed with Him. Why? Because of His teaching. And actually Simon Peter rebuked Him when He spoke of His impending death, ". . . Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee" ([Matt. 16:22](#)). Even His loyal disciples didn't like that kind of teaching. When men came into contact with the Lord Jesus Christ, they found grace and truth; they found sweetness and strength; they found meekness and majesty; they found light and love. He appealed to men, but when he died on a cross that cross became an offense. The Cross is still an offense, but Jesus is still attractive.



It is said that when Savonarola in the city of Florence went before the great populace and said, "Be free," they applauded him. But when he said to them, "Be pure," they ran him out of town. They refused his teaching when it did not appeal to them. The Lord Jesus said to men, "You have to turn from sin. You cannot live in sin. I have come to make you free, but I will have to give My life for you and you will have to come as sinners to Me." And sinners came -- when men were desperate, they would come to Him. I believe that is the only way men will come to Him even today.

I wish that I could present Him as He really was nineteen hundred years ago when He came to this earth. How wonderful He was! Today, your sorrow is His sorrow, and your joy is His joy. He will be the same in the future -- "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." He is never going to change. Some day we will be in His presence. How wonderful that will be!

Before we leave this subject, let me share with you an excerpt from a booklet written by Dr. C. I. Scofield, entitled The Loveliness of Christ:

First of all, as it seems to me, this loveliness of Christ consists in His perfect humanity. Am I understood? I do not now mean that He was a perfect human, but that He was perfectly human.

In everything but our sins, and our evil natures, He is one with us. He grew in stature and in grace. He labored, and wept, and prayed, and loved. He was tempted in all points as we are -- sin apart. With Thomas, we confess Him Lord and God; we adore and revere Him, but beloved, there is no other who establishes with us such intimacy, who comes so close to these human hearts of ours; no one in the universe of whom we are so little afraid. He enters as simply and naturally into our twentieth century lives as if He had been reared in the same street.

He is wonderful, my friend, and you ought to know Him. Paul, who came to know Him, found that even at the end of his life he wanted to know Him better. He said, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection . . ." ([Phil. 3:10](#)). Today my one ambition is to know Him and to get out His Word -- I cannot think of anything better to do.

Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein [[Heb. 13:9](#)].

It is amazing that most of the cults today go in for special diets. I believe that food is important as far as the health of the body is concerned, but it has nothing to do with your relationship to God. Paul wrote, "But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse" ([1Cor. 8:8](#)). He is saying the same thing here. Do not go off into these strange cults and teachings in which diet and ceremonies and rituals and little study groups are supposed to make you a super-duper saint. Nothing in the world is going to build you up but the Word of God. The Word of God will build you up if it brings you to the person of Christ, and only the Holy Spirit can take the things of Christ and make them real unto you.

We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle [[Heb. 13:10](#)].

A comparison is being made here between what Israel had under the old covenant in contrast to the better things of the new covenant. Believers today have an altar, but this altar is not the Lord's Supper as some people have mistakenly interpreted it to mean. We do not have a material altar with a local address, but we have an altar which is in heaven. It is the throne of grace up yonder. It was a throne of judgment -- He condemned us there -- but now that the blood has been placed there, we can come and find grace and salvation.

I would like to say at this point that Christian fellowship is not a church banquet. For years while I was in the ministry I heard it said: "Come to the banquet. We are going to have some marvelous Christian fellowship." No, you're not, my friend. You are just going there for a good time and to fill your little tummy. The only place you can have real Christian fellowship (koinonia) is around the Word of God. It is the Word of God which brings you to the person of Christ and enables you to see Him in all His glory. It is then that you will have fellowship and a good time with other believers. Our Lord is wonderful, my friend -- it is terrible to pass Him by.

For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp [[Heb. 13:11](#)].

The writer is referring to the sin offering. When Christ died it was for the fact that you and I are sinners. Not only do we commit sin, we are sinners by nature, and He took our sins on Himself that He might give us a new nature.

Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate [[Heb. 13:12](#)].

Jesus died outside the city. Why? Because He was the sin offering. The sin offering was taken away from the temple and "burned without the camp." Jesus was our sin offering, and He paid the penalty for our sin.

Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach [[Heb. 13:13](#)].

The writer is saying to these Hebrew Christians, "Don't mind leaving the temple. Don't mind leaving the rituals. Those things are not helpful. Go to Him -- Go to Christ."

My friend, we, too, are to go to Him. We are on our way to a heavenly Jerusalem. This is real separation he is talking about here. Today we put the emphasis on separation from; we are separated from something -- that is, "I don't do this and I don't do that." Real separation is not from; it is unto. Paul said he was separated unto the gospel, separated unto Christ, separated unto the Word of God. In fact the word Hebrew means the "one who crossed over." Abraham was called a Hebrew because he had come from the other side of the Euphrates River, signifying that his old life was gone. The children of Israel crossed the Red Sea, and they were delivered from slavery; they were redeemed, and a new life was then possible. Then they had to cross the Jordan River to live in the Promised Land, the land of Canaan, the kind of life that we also should live down here.

We are to go "without the camp, bearing his reproach." The Hebrew Christians hated to leave the temple and their religion. Many people today are wrapped up in "churchianity," thinking that because they are members of a church they are saved. They need to get away from ritual and religion and come to Christ. Come to Him -- that is real separation, and that is real salvation.

For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come  
[[Heb. 13:14](#)].

Again the writer makes it clear that we have nothing permanent down here.

### **Spiritual Life Of The Believer (13:15-19)**

By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God  
continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name  
[[Heb. 13:15](#)].

A child of God is a priest today and can bring sacrifices to God. There are four sacrifices of a believer. (1) You can sacrifice your person (see [Rom. 12:1](#)). Someone has said, "When one truly gives himself to the Lord, all other giving becomes easy." (2) You can sacrifice your purse (see [2Cor. 8:1-5](#)). If He doesn't have your purse, He doesn't have you. (3) You can offer the sacrifice of praise, which we find in this verse: "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name." (4) Finally, you can offer the sacrifice of performance or doing good, which we find in the following verse --

But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such  
sacrifices God is well pleased [[Heb. 13:16](#)].

When you took that basket of fruit over to that dear, lonely, and sick child of God whom everyone has forgotten about, you were a priest offering a sacrifice to God. It was well pleasing to Him -- He took delight in your doing that. Again I must refer to the time when I was seriously ill and flat on my back. At that time I received many letters from folk who were lots worse off physically than I was. They wrote lovely letters, and every one of them was a sacrifice. And many folk helped me in a tangible way, and that too was a sacrifice well pleasing to God. My friend, if Christianity does not walk in shoe leather it is no good at all. The Lord Jesus is up yonder at the right hand of God -- that is where He is as Head of the church -- but His feet are down here right where the rubber meets the road. He wants Christianity to be in shoe leather, and He would like to walk in your shoes.

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for  
they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that  
they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable  
for you [[Heb. 13:17](#)].

We had this same thought in [verse 7](#). If your pastor is a man of God who is teaching the Word of God then you are to obey the Word of God as he has given it to you. It would be better to not hear the Word of God, than to hear it and not obey it.

Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly [[Heb. 13:18](#)].

"Pray for us." Evidently the readers of this epistle knew the writer, and I believe the writer was Paul.

"For we trust we have good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly." It is wonderful to pillow your head at night with a good conscience, a conscience enlightened by the Word of God. A great many people are not walking in the light. "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" ([1John 1:6-7](#)).

But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner [[Heb. 13:19](#)].

This statement also makes me believe that Paul wrote this epistle. Apparently he was in prison at this time, and he is saying to these Hebrew Christians, "I want to come back and be among you again" -- after all, he was a Hebrew himself.

### **Benediction (13:20-25)**

Now we come to the benediction, a benediction which I have used thousands of times in my ministry.

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen [[Heb. 13:20-21](#)].

"That great shepherd of the sheep." The Lord Jesus is here called the Great Shepherd. In [Psalm 22](#) He is presented as the Good Shepherd, and in [John 10:11](#) He calls Himself the Good Shepherd. As the Good Shepherd He gave His life for the sheep. As the Great Shepherd He is the one who perfects the sheep and builds them up. We see that here and also in [Psalm 23](#). He leads us beside the still waters and leads us to the place where the grass is good and green and very tender, that is, to the Word of God. Then in [Psalm 24](#) He is presented as the Chief Shepherd. "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" ([1Pet. 5:4](#)). He died in the past as the Good Shepherd; He is the Great Shepherd today; and He is coming some day as the Chief Shepherd for His sheep. He started out with one hundred sheep, and do you know how many sheep He is going to have with Him in heaven? Ninety-nine? No. He is going to have all one hundred sheep with him there.

"Through the blood of the everlasting covenant." Christ's blood is the basis of every covenant God has ever made.

"Make you perfect" -- this has been the purpose of the Epistle to the Hebrews. We have been told, "Let us go on to perfection." He means for us to go on to maturation, to being full-grown children of God. It is marvelous to admire a little baby lying in the crib, but if

you come back in twenty years and he is still lying there, saying, "Da-da-da," something is radically wrong. There are a lot of such saints who need to come to maturation, to grow up, and the Epistle to the Hebrews will help them to do that.

"In every good work to do his will." What is the important thing for a child of God? To do His will -- to allow Him to work His will in your life, "working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter unto you in few words [[Heb. 13:22](#)].

Notice how personal this is. I have to smile when he says he wrote this "in few words." To my judgment this is a long letter, but he calls it "few words."

Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you [[Heb. 13:23](#)].

Again, this sounds like Paul. Apparently Timothy had been in prison. A note in my Bible at the bottom of this chapter says, "Written to the Hebrews from Italy by Timothy." That is not part of the text, but it is some man's interpretation. This man could be wrong, and I could be wrong in saying that Paul wrote this epistle. The important thing is that the Holy Spirit wrote it and that He takes the things of Christ and shows them unto us.

Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you [[Heb. 13:24](#)].

The writer was in Italy, and so was Paul.

He closes this epistle with a wonderful benediction, and I will close with it also. I cannot improve on it because it interprets itself --

Grace be with you all. Amen [[Heb. 13:25](#)].

## **Appendix (13:20-25)**

**THEME:** The authorship of Hebrews or did Paul write Hebrews?; internal evidences on authorship; date and destination; arguments available on authorship; a defense of the Pauline authorship

## **The Authorship Of Hebrews Or Did Paul Write Hebrews? (13:20-25)**

The Epistle to the Hebrews presents many moot problems. Some of them are in conjunction with the question of authorship, which we shall consider under the following divisions:

1. Internal evidence on authorship (Is Hebrews an epistle or treatise?)
2. Date and destination
3. Arguments available on authorship
4. A defense of the Pauline authorship

It is evident that we are contending for the Pauline authorship of Hebrews. First we shall present all arguments against it, as indicated by the headings. Then we shall present the evidence that establishes the Pauline authorship in our own thinking.

### **Internal Evidences On Authorship (13:20-25)**

The deciding factor in determining the authorship, according to one writer, is that tradition and history shed no light upon the question of the authorship of Hebrews. This probably is being considered first because we do not agree with the writer on this statement. Rather, we believe that both history and tradition lend a deciding voice to this question.

We are therefore thrown back, in our search for the author, on such evidence as the epistle itself affords, and that is wholly inferential. It seems probable that the author was a Hellenist, a Greek-speaking Jew. He was familiar with the Scriptures of the OT and with the religious ideas and worship of the Jews. He claims the inheritance of their sacred history, traditions and institutions ([Heb. 1:1](#)), and dwells on them with an intimate knowledge and enthusiasm that would be improbable, though not impossible, in a proselyte, and still more in a Christian convert from heathenism. But he knew the OT only in the LXX [Septuagint] translation, which he follows even where it deviates from the Hebrew. He writes Greek with a purity of style and vocabulary to which the writings of Luke alone in the NT can be compared. His mind is imbued with that combination of Hebrew and Greek thought which is best known in the writings of Philo. His general typological mode of thinking, his use of the allegorical method, as well as the adoption of many terms that are most familiar in Alexandrian thought, all reveal the Hellenistic mind. Yet his fundamental conceptions are in full accord with the teaching of Paul and of the Johannine writings.

The central position assigned to Christ, the high estimate of His person, the saving significance of His death, the general trend of the ethical teaching, the writer's opposition to asceticism and his esteem for the rulers and teachers of the church, all bear out the inference that he belonged to a Christian circle dominated by Pauline ideas. The author and his readers alike were not personal disciples of Jesus, but had received the gospel from those who had heard the Lord ([Heb. 2:3](#)) and who were no longer living ([Heb. 13:7](#)). . . . The letter [Paul] quotes the OT from the Hebrew and LXX but Hebrews only from LXX. . . . For Paul the OT is law, and stands in antithesis to the NT, but in Hebrews the OT is covenant, and is the "shadow" of the New Covenant. (The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, vol. II, p. 1357.)

We have quoted voluminously from this writer because his main thesis is to show that Paul could not have been the author. His sole proof is based on the internal evidence from the epistle.

In considering the internal nature of the epistle, a word must be said relative to the question: Is it really an epistle? There is no word of salutation or greeting in this Epistle to the Hebrews, such as marks the other New Testament books, with the possible exception of 1 John. It is in the form of a treatise rather than a letter. In it are long, philosophical sentences written in purest idiomatic Greek. It bears no mark of a translation from the Hebrew, as Clement of Alexandria suggests. This is an inference on



his part because it was written to Hebrew-speaking Jews. The length of the epistle is another thing that might suggest a treatise, yet note the author's own words in this respect, "... for I have written a letter unto you in few words" ([Heb. 13:22](#)). Delitzsch has this enlightening comment to make on this epistle:

We seem at first to have a treatise before us, but the special hortatory reference interwoven with the most discursive and dogmatic portions of the work soon show us that it is really a kind of sermon addressed to some particular and well known auditory; while at the close the homiletic form changes into that of an epistle.

According to Deissmann's definition of an epistle as distinct from a letter, we feel sure that this would allow it to fall under the category of an epistle. Its conclusion is that of an epistle. Later in our discussion we shall present a reason for the omission of a greeting. These problems are intimately tied up with the question of authorship, especially when one attempts to maintain the Pauline authorship. We agree with Plumer that this is an epistle.

As we conclude this section on the internal nature of the Epistle to the Hebrews, we should note that this epistle is in composition and lofty concept the masterpiece of the New Testament, although there is no conclusive evidence for the authorship. Only suggestions and intimations shed light on this problem. In our defense for the Pauline authorship we shall undertake to show that the suggestions and intimations point to Paul as the author, yet we are not dogmatic in stating that the proof is positive.

## **Date And Destination (13:20-25)**

The latest date for the composition of Hebrews is A.D. 96. The earliest date cannot be determined so easily. It must have been written after A.D. 50 if it is made dependent on Paul's epistles. All critics fix the dating between these two terminal points. Moffatt shows that Clement, Justin Martyr, Hermas, and Tertullian knew of it and quoted from it. Clement quoted from it at length. By the second century it was widely circulated and read. Rees places the date around A.D. 80, Moffatt around A.D. 85. Here is a list of the probable datings: Basnage -- A.D. 61; L'Enfant and Beausobre -- A.D. 62; Horne and Bagster -- A.D. 62 or 63; Pearson, Lardner, Tomlin, Mill, Wetstein, and Tillemont -- A.D. 63; Authorized Version and Lloyd -- A.D. 64; Michaelis -- A.D. 64-65; Scott -- A.D. 65; Ebrard before A.D. 58. The number of dates given suggests that the means used to arrive at a date was by way of the lottery, not by process of scholarship. However, Hebrews must have been written before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Because there is constant reference to the Old Testament ritual being in progress at that time, certainly there would have been reference to the destruction of the temple. Having examined the arguments carefully, we are fully persuaded that those who place the dating of it after the destruction of Jerusalem do not sufficiently answer the question of why the writer omitted reference to this catastrophe.

E. Schuyler English gives us this word:

It is also obvious that the epistle was written before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. For at the time of its composition Mosaic institutions were still being observed --

priests were offering gifts according to the Law ([Heb. 8:3-5](#)) and the temple was still standing ([Heb. 13:11-12](#)). The temple was in Jerusalem.

Godet has a fitting comment:

This epistle, without introduction or subscription, is like the great High Priest of whom it treats, who was without beginning of days or end of years, abiding an High Priest continually. It is entirely fitting that it should remain anonymous.

The epistle was first accepted by the Eastern church. Athanasius accepted it, and the council of Carthage confirmed it in A.D. 397. Paul's name was on the epistle about the time it began to circulate.

The consensus is that Hebrews was written to Jewish Christians. But where were the Jewish Christians located? It was not written for the whole body of Jewish believers everywhere. It was written to a particular church located in a particular place. The epistle bears testimony to this: The church had for some time obeyed the gospel ([Heb. 5:12](#)); past conduct inspired confidence in their sincerity ([Heb. 6:9](#)); they had been kind to God's people ([Heb. 6:10](#)); note other personal references in [Hebrews 10:32-34](#); [Hebrews 13:19, 23](#). Was this church in Palestine or out of Palestine? It is around this question that the argument on destination is based.

First of all, there is evidence that the first readers were Jews. The epistle assumes an intimate knowledge with the Old Testament. The readers were of the same lineage as Jews in the Old Testament ([Heb. 1:1](#); [Heb. 3:9](#)). Zahn has this comment to make:

Hebrews does not contain a single sentence in which it is so much as intimated that the readers became members of God's people who descended from Abraham, and heirs of the promise given to them and their forefathers, and how they became such. [Heb. 13:13](#) shows that both the readers and author were members of the Jewish race.

Now we shall try to determine to whom or rather what particular church the author was addressing. This epistle is addressed to the Hebrews, which word in the New Testament does not apply to all Jews. It was used for those who were more thoroughly of Jewish origins and habits and who spoke the vernacular of Palestine. The other Jews outside of Palestine were designated Hellenists. Lindsay says that [Acts 6:1](#) makes this distinction clear. DeWette says that Eusebius, speaking of the Jews of Asia Minor, styles them not Hebrews but ex Hebraion ontes. Chrysostom says that this epistle was sent to Jerusalem. The fact that the epistle was written in Greek does not negate the evidence that it was sent to Palestine, for it is natural for a writer out of Palestine to write in the universal language of his day. The Palestinian Jews were well acquainted with Greek, as Deissmann has clearly demonstrated. In fact, it was the language of communication. DeWette held to the opinion that this epistle was destined to parts other than Palestine; yet he acknowledges that the Jewish character of the epistle -- the persecutions which they were enduring, the consequent risk of apostasy, and the ancient opinion -- reveal Palestine as the more probable destination. Ebrard wrote, "We are at liberty to seek these Jewish Christians only in Jerusalem."

### **Arguments Available On Authorship (13:20-25)**

We can say with Shakespeare that we have now come to the very heart of the matter. There is less evidence for the authorship of this epistle than of any other book of the New Testament. Others have problems of authorship, but there is some definite evidence available and some general agreement, at least, regarding the author. For example, nearly all critics say that some John wrote the fourth Gospel. But there is no such agreement regarding Hebrews. Moffatt rightly says that few characters in the New Testament have escaped the attention of those in late days who have sought to identify them as the author of Hebrews. Apollos, Peter, Philip, Silvanus, Prisca, Barnabas, and Paul have all been suggested as the possible author. To Moffatt's list we might add the names of Luke, Silas, Clement of Rome, Ariston, and Titus, all of whom have been suggested as the possible author. Out of this dozen, one is privileged to take his choice -- or refrain from doing so, as Moffatt does. Moffatt concludes that the author was one of those unknown personalities in whom the early church was more rich than we realize. There is absolutely no basis, other than conjecture, for asserting that most of these were the author, although several have a plausible claim.

As we examine their claim to authorship, Luke and Clement are easily eliminated because a comparison of their writings to the Epistle to the Hebrews reveals a difference in style, composition, and influence. Clement quotes from Hebrews, and his own writings show marked differences. (See introduction of Moffatt's commentary on Hebrews.) So little is known of the others, with the exception of Barnabas, that it is impossible to establish a case for or against them. Barnabas will be considered in the three theories that are presented.

In the early church were three traditions regarding the authorship of Hebrews: The Alexandrian tradition supported the Pauline authorship; the African tradition supported the authorship of Barnabas; Rome and the West supported the idea that it was anonymous.

1. Alexandrian tradition: Clement says that his teacher, probably Pantaenus, explained why Paul did not address his readers under his name. He further states that Paul wrote it in Hebrew and Luke translated it into Greek. Origen follows Clement, but knowing that the view of Alexandria was criticized, he concludes that the author is "known only to God." By the fourth century the tradition of the Pauline authorship was well established in Alexandria, Syria, and Greece. This tradition prevailed until the revival of learning. Eusebius favored the Pauline tradition, as did Dionysius of Alexandria, Alexander of Alexandria, Athanasius, Cyril of Jerusalem, Epiphanius, the Council of Laodicea of A.D. 363, and Erasmus. Among those who denied the Pauline tradition were Irenaeus, Cyprian of Carthage, Tertullian, Caius and Novatus, presbyters of the church at Rome. Calvin did not accept the tradition, for he says, "I, indeed, can deduce no reason to show that Paul was its author." Luther and Moll defend the authorship of Apollos against the Pauline tradition. Thus we see that tradition was probably equally divided.

2. African tradition: This view supported Barnabas as the author of Hebrews. Tertullian was the leading exponent, for he attributed the epistle, without question, to Barnabas. This is the most tempting suggestion, as Wickham remarks. It suits the character of Barnabas. Barnabas was a "Levite of the country of Cyprus," a Hellenist by birthplace, but a Hebrew by race, interested in the sacrificial system, companion of Paul (yet one

who entertained views of his own), the "son of consolation," the mediator and peacemaker between old and new. Zahn infers that this tradition arose in Montanist churches and originated in Asia. However, this tradition was superseded by the Alexandrian tradition, for in A.D. 393 the council of Hippo reckoned thirteen epistles to Paul, but in A.D. 419 the council of Carthage reckoned fourteen to Paul, which would include Hebrews.

3. Roman tradition: This view said the author was anonymous. No tradition of authorship appears before A.D. 400, according to Rees. Stephen Gobarus, writing in A.D. 600, says that both Irenaeus and Hippolytus denied the Pauline authorship. The epistle was known to Clement of Rome, and he mentions no one as author. Another suggestion as to the authorship of Hebrews is mentioned by Plumer. It is that of Zenas, the lawyer. This makes thirteen guesses as to the author of Hebrews.

### **A Defense Of The Pauline Authorship (13:20-25)**

We are not holding dogmatically or tenaciously to an obsolete view. Rather, we have examined the evidence and find no reason to reject the Pauline authorship. It is not our purpose in this section to affirm that Paul wrote Hebrews, but to set forth our reasons for tentatively accepting the Pauline authorship, or the authority, that this epistle rests upon, for the canonicity of this epistle depends largely upon the view of authorship. It was accepted into the canon on Pauline authority; and with that removed, it is possible to reject this great epistle.

Under the first heading (Internal Evidences on Authorship) we attempted to show that all the light from the epistle itself reveals only the fact that the author is anonymous. His name is nowhere mentioned in the epistle. Now, using the internal evidence, we want to show how Paul could be the author.

So far we have tried to show two things: (1) there is no evidence, external or internal, to support any claim as to the authorship, except it be Paul; (2) there is nothing incompatible with thinking that Paul wrote it.

Now we shall take our third burden of proof and attempt to show that internal and external evidence support the Pauline authorship.

1. Internal Evidence: Origen remarked that the thoughts (noemata) of this epistle all bore the stamp of Paul's mind, but the language was Hellenikotera, purer Greek than his. Following is Lindsay's list of representations and images which are found in Hebrews and in Paul's other epistles, which are not found in the works of other New Testament writers.

Compare [Heb. 1:1, 3](#) with [2Cor. 4:4](#); [Col. 1:15-16](#).

Compare [Heb. 1:4](#); [Heb. 2:9](#) with [Phil. 2:8-9](#).

Compare [Heb. 2:14](#) with [1Cor. 15:54, 57](#).

Compare [Heb. 7:16, 18-19](#) with [Rom. 2:29](#); [Gal. 3:3, 24](#).

Compare [Heb. 7:26](#) with [Eph. 4:10](#).

Compare [Heb. 8:5](#); [Heb. 10:1](#) with [Col. 2:17](#).

Compare [Heb. 10:12-13](#) with [1Cor. 15:25](#).

DeWette and Bleek have concluded that since Hebrews reads more like Paul's writing than any other New Testament writings, it was written by a disciple of Paul. The

opponents of the Pauline authorship are quoted to show that this book is not unlike Paul's writings and could have been written by Paul. Paul obviously meets this requirement.

Some have claimed that [Hebrews 2:3](#) excludes Paul as the author because he says in [Galatians 1:11-12](#) that he received his gospel not from men but from God. However, this is not incongruous with Paul's statement in Galatians. Paul is evidently using the editorial "we" that is used so effectually in the New Testament. If Paul places himself in the same category with the other Christians at Jerusalem, he could not say that we received it from God on the road to Damascus about midday on a mule. Paul's conversion was peculiar to himself. Then the Galatians passage does not exclude the fact that Paul did not have it confirmed unto him by the ones who heard the Lord. In Galatians he is defending his apostleship and is therefore showing from whence he received his authority.

As to the statement that [Hebrews 13:7](#) reveals that the apostles were no longer living at the time Hebrews was written, we can hardly see where this verse establishes any such view.

Regarding the fact that the Epistle to the Hebrews quotes the Old Testament from the Septuagint Version, it is possible for Paul to have quoted only from the Septuagint in Hebrews and from both the Septuagint and the Hebrew in his other epistles. The fact that there are more quotations in this book than in any other New Testament book shows that the author is placing a great deal of stress on these quotations. Instead of quoting from memory, he would have a copy of the Old Testament at hand. Paul did quote from the Septuagint frequently, and he could easily have used it exclusively in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Rees says that Paul's Christology turns about the death, resurrection, and living presence of Christ in the church. In contrast, the Epistle to the Hebrews centers about the high priestly nature of Christ's work. He evidently is thinking of Ephesians, Colossians, 1 Corinthians, and Romans, for the rest of Paul's epistles deal no more with these subjects than does Hebrews. This method of trying to distinguish different authors by difference of style is not conclusive, to say the least. Certainly it is not a valid argument in this epistle.

We come now to the problem of the absence of the author's name in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Why did the author conceal his name? The theory has been advanced that had Paul been the author he would have subscribed his name, and the fact that his name does not appear shows he did not write it. We submit Plumer's answer to this sort of reasoning:

Moreover, if Paul is proven not to be its author because it lacks his name, the same reasoning would prove it had no author at all, for it bears no name whatsoever.

Now let us examine the reasons why Paul might have concealed his name. Dr. Biesenthal, writing on Hebrews, advances a new and interesting theory for the reason the writer concealed his name. He shows that Christianity's teaching that animal sacrifices were no longer needed was being felt in heathendom. Consequently, sacrifices at births, marriages, and other occasions, were being neglected. The priestly class, which lived by these sacrifices, and the large cattle industry, were being threatened by utter ruin. This created a great antagonism against Christianity. Dr. Biesenthal, a Hebrew by race,

concludes that for this reason the writer withheld his name from this epistle which so bitterly denounces animal sacrifices.

Also Paul himself was a man who was hated by the Jewish nation. To them he was no less than a traitor. This brilliant young Pharisee, who was well versed in the ritual of Moses, as he himself claims, was anathema to his brethren in the flesh. In writing to them this learned work, composed in the best Greek, he withheld the name that would prevent its circulation among those to whom it was originally destined.

There is another reason we think to be more valid, which was presented even by the Alexandrian tradition. It is that Paul left off his salutation, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ," because he was not the apostle to the Jews but to the Gentiles. Another more recent suggestion on this line comes from a consideration of [Hebrews 3:1](#): ". . . Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." Christ is the great Apostle in this epistle and the writer would not subscribe his name beside the one of Christ. Certainly the fact that the writer did not mention his name does not eliminate Paul from the list of possible authors.

There are a few suggestions in the epistle that point to Paul as author. The writer was a Jew acquainted with the details of Mosaic ritualism ([Heb. 13:13](#)). He was acquainted with Greek philosophy, or rather, Alexandrian thought. The author of this epistle had been in prison in the locality where the ones addressed resided ([Heb. 10:34](#)). He was at that time in prison in Italy ([Heb. 13:19, 24](#)). Timothy was his companion and messenger ([Heb. 13:23](#)). When Paul was in Rome in prison he used Timothy to carry messages, and he sent him on a trip from the west to the east ([Phil. 2:19](#)). The writer hoped to be liberated ([Heb. 13:19](#)). This is the same thought that is expressed in [Philippians 1:25](#) and [Philemon 1:22](#). While these suggestions are not conclusive, who better fits this description than Paul? An appropriate supposition from Lightfoot concludes this section on internal evidence: "The very style of it may argue the scholar of Gamaliel."

The dating of the Epistle to the Hebrews does not conflict with the Pauline authorship. If it were written before the destruction of Jerusalem, which we believe to be correct, it coincides nicely with Paul's imprisonment at Rome. Paul's last visit to Jerusalem helps explain the epistle. The Book of Acts tells us that Paul went up to Jerusalem in spite of the warning of the Spirit. His arrest was the result of having gone into the temple to purify himself with the four men who had a vow. This he was asked to do and to make apparent that he walked orderly and kept the Law. Did he do wrong? This is not a question for us to answer. The point is that he -- knowing that he was dead to the Law -- acted through zeal and love for his brethren. The believers at Jerusalem still clung to the Law and to the temple. When Paul was in Rome, he wrote this epistle to show these Jews the better things of the new covenant and to warn them not to be drawn back into Judaism. This throws a great deal of light on [Hebrews 13:13](#): "Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp [Judaism], bearing his reproach."

The Spirit of God could have used this epistle for the comfort of Jewish Christians right before the destruction of the temple. We suggest this to show that the dating and destination are not incompatible with the Pauline authorship.



2. External Evidence: Several of the early church fathers who favored the Pauline authorship have been mentioned, but we have reserved for this section other evidence that confirms us in our view that Paul wrote Hebrews. This is Origen's statement in full regarding the author of Hebrews.

The thoughts are Paul's but the phraseology and composition are by someone else. Not without reason have the ancient men handed down the Epistle as Paul's, but who wrote the Epistle is known only to God.

We especially note that clause which is italicized. Evidently there was already in Origen's day a tradition that Paul wrote this epistle. Quite evidently it was the opinion of the earliest church in the East that Hebrews was Paul's epistle. It was not until a later day, and by a church more remote from Palestine, that the tradition arose of another author. Jerome, the greatest of the Latin fathers, considered Paul the author. It was during the third and fourth centuries that the Pauline authorship was denied in Rome. It is also interesting to note that during this same period the epistle was held in disrepute. After it regained its place as canonical Scripture, it was also considered as Pauline. Lindsay makes this valuable comment on the Western tradition. Jerome suggests that at first it was received in Rome as Scripture and received also as Pauline. It is significant that both go together.

Others could be mentioned, but they would add nothing decisive either way.

We now turn to a bit of evidence that is enlightening. Peter wrote to those of the circumcision, to believing Jews everywhere. In [2Peter 3:15](#) he mentions the fact that Paul had written to them. He separated this epistle from the others of Paul ([v. 16](#)). No epistle of Paul other than Hebrews answers to this statement. If Hebrews is not the epistle, then the epistle to which he refers has been lost.

To conclude our remarks, we quote a statement from Weymouth that illustrates how easy it is to defend a theory and support it with misinformation:

The only fact clear as to the author is that he was not the Apostle Paul. The early Fathers did not attribute the book to Paul, nor was it until the seventh century that the tendency to do this, derived from Jerome, swelled into an ecclesiastical practice. From the book itself we see that the author must have been a Jew and a Hellenist, familiar with Philo as well as with the Old Testament, a friend of Timothy and well known to many of those whom he addressed, and not an Apostle but decidedly acquainted with Apostolic thoughts; and that he not only wrote before the destruction of Jerusalem but apparently himself was never in Palestine. The name of Barnabas, and also that of Priscilla, has been suggested, but in reality all these distinctive marks appear to be found only in Apollos. So that with Luther, and not a few modern scholars, we must either attribute it to him or give up the quest.

This statement is very sweeping, incorrect, and superficial. He does not even present the facts.

While we do not dogmatically assert our thesis of the Pauline authorship with any such note of certainty, we do not see fit to change our view without sufficient evidence. We still believe it to be reasonable to accept the Pauline tradition.

We deplore the fact that the King James Version carries the heading, The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews. It should read, The Epistle to the Hebrews. Such is the tenet that we affirm in this paper.

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